CHICAGO LEDGER

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AN INTERESTING SECRET.

Mas' Tu'key Gobbler, yo' looks mighty sly.
Whut yo' struttin' roun' so spry?
Yo' kin rare yo' haid ez high---
But I know sump'n.

Win's ablown' mighty col'.
Knows a secret I be'n tol'.
Yo' am struttin' mighty bol'---
But I know sump'n.

Thanksgivin' ain't but few days off:
Taters gittin' mighty sof'.
Taters an' tu'key, I lubs 'em bof'---
En I know sump'n.

The Sky Smuggler;

Or, The Man-Bird's Daughter

By STANLEY F. MATTHEWS

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CHAPTER III.

THE AEROPLANE MAN.

BY THIS time my clothes had thoroughly dried, and I was feeling quite comfortable; seated there in an easy chair before the fire, the warmth caused me to close my eyes; and yet somehow I could not lose senses in sleep.

It seemed that mentally I was never more wide awake in my life; and that a thousand things were trooping through my brain, following each other like a flock of sheep chasing the bell-wether over a low gate.

Naturally the most important subject that held my attention concerned the secret mission with which I had been entrusted by my chief, who had selected me for this duty out of the whole bunch of agents under his control, a fact that gave me much pride, and would spur me on to doing my best in order to prove that his confidence had not been misplaced.

Recently, as is well known to all who read the papers, the authorities at such large ports as New York City, had been unusually active in suppressing the gentle art of smuggling, that of late had assumed gigantic proportions, so that the Government was annually losing millions in escaped duties.

These contraband goods consisted of course of those articles upon which a very heavy duty was imposed, either to protect the American mechanic or because they were deemed a luxury to be afforded only by the very rich.

Silks, laces and precious stones constituted the bulk of the smuggled goods, and it seemed as though not only were the wealthy concerned in this fraud, but many tradesmen, yes, and women too, had entered into the game, until a determined Collector leveled the entire machinery in his department at the corruption, and by a few prompt arrests struck terror to the hearts of the guilty ones—it was even reported that a wireless message had been sent to an incoming steamer, by friends of the passengers, warning them to declare everything they had; which meant that many would for once fail to pay the entire expenses of a six months' tour abroad by means of the profit to be wrung out of the diamonds or other jewels which they meant to smuggle in, and dispose of later at an enormous profit.

Then it was that some other method of bringing these articles into the country must be found, and naturally the eyes of the aroused authorities were turned toward the two borders, that of Mexico and Canada, though there was little danger of the former entering into the game, since no steamers reached there direct from Europe.

Certain information had come into our hands that caused an additional number of secret agents to be hurriedly dispatched to points along the northern border; for it was known that, afraid to land the spoils at New York as formerly, some of the heaviest of these smugglers had transferred the scene of their bold operations to this quarter; and for some little time at least it was calculated there would be warm times along the Canadian frontier, with all manner of shrewd devices set on foot whereby the customs might be beaten at their game.

One heavy set of diamonds in particular, manipulated by a clique of operators, had been reported by an agent in Paris, who had followed the buyer, a well known society woman of Gotham, through Venice and other cities where in certain streets the shops make a specialty of purveying to wealthy Americans; and it being known that the shipment had never arrived in New York as intended, speculation was rife as to just how the smugglers hoped to accomplish their end.

I had already picked up a number of slight clews that gave me hope to the effect that I was on a hot trail, and that there was cause to believe one at least of these operators was a member of the Country Club situated on the Dominion side of the St. Lawrence; which in itself was proof in my eyes that sooner or later the gems were to be carried across to the other shore.

It would seem to be an easy thing to accomplish this, since there is so much territory to be covered that it is utterly impossible to watch every mile of it; but in the first place these secret agents are unknown to even the natives, so that the supposed sportsman who comes to hunt or fish; or, it may be the guide who pilots a party into the woods and carries out his assumed profession to perfection, may be in the employ of the Government, and keenly on the watch for suspicious circumstances.

Guilt makes cowards, and those who would cheat Uncle Sam of his just dues easily fancy that every stranger may be a shrewd spy whose suspicions have already been aroused toward their quarter; hence they hesitate to take the positive step that will make them law-breakers.

Accordingly, I was of the opinion that, since this cargo of precious stones was of such unusual value some means beyond the ordinary would be brought into play in order to successfully land them on the forbidden territory.

Already in a faint way had my mind turned inquiringly toward the possibility of Captain Simeon being concerned in the matter; I had not been near the Country Club for a week, and he must have turned up during my absence running down what proved to be a false clew, which accounted for my surprise when I found myself looking upon his pretty daughter, who, as I have already frankly confessed, had been much in my mind of late.

And sitting there I found myself weighing Captain Simeon in the balance, with the design of deciding whether he would be the sort of man to engage in such an undertaking.

I was quickly overwhelmed with evidence pointing that way, for where under the sun could a better man be found uniting the qualities necessary for such a desperate task than in this old soldier of fortune—had not much of his eventful life been taken up with running blockades and engineering filibustering expeditions—did he not take an actual delight in laughing at all efforts to prevent him from doing what he had set his heart on; and was he not conscience-hardened enough to joke with a customs agent even while he might have a little fortune in gems secreted in the barrels of a shotgun he was carrying back ostensibly from a Canadian hunt?

It gave me a queer feeling to think thus of the adventurous Morgan, for I had rather liked him in the past, being an admirer of pure nerve wherever found; but what worried me most was the thought that he was the father of Tressie, and that if fortune compelled me to balk his schemes, I was pretty certain to gain his eternal emnity, and thus ruin whatever chance I might have of winning her consent to some fine day become Mrs. Bob. Merriles.

No wonder I could not find solace in slumber—no wonder I sat there with my eyes closed, and pondered upon the hard nut I had to crack, being deep in love with a woods nymph, and she the daughter of the man whom a stern sense of my obligations to the Government might compel me to arrest ere many days had passed.

I think I must have groaned in thus wrestling with the weighty problem, and I am positive that I heartily wished my Chief had seen fit to put some other man on the job, since things had turned out the way they now seemed to be pointing.

Perhaps I had been sitting there an hour, or it may have been twice that time for aught I know; but suddenly my ruminations were broken in upon by Tige giving tongue in the other part of the bungalow, and I opened my eyes, wondering what this signified; evidently the watchful dog had heard a sound without that told him some one was approaching; and I could readily surmise without trouble that it could hardly be any one save the captain, who might have managed to work across, since the passage from the Canadian bank was protected more by islands than my own course had been.

The door was suddenly thrown open, and I looked up to see two men enter. In the leader I immediately recognized Captain Simeon, while his companion was an American, supposed to be a well-to-do fellow interested in the subject of aeronautics, and willing to spend some money in advancing the sport.

I had met Mr. Clarence Shipley before, and he was marked down in my memory books as a possible candidate for honors in the big scheme that was being engineered on the border, looking to the hoodwinking of Uncle Sam.

But, strange to say, as my eyes fell upon him, and in the company of Captain Simeon, my first thought was not in the line of any possible smuggling business, but that he was a deuced handsome chap as men go, and that the old filibuster had an exceedingly pretty and interesting daughter—from which it is easy to see how the heart will persist in thrusting it's affairs in front of business despite a conscientious devotion to duty.

Plainly the old aeronaut was astounded at seeing me, and his darkening face told plainer than words could have done that anger followed fast upon the heels of his surprise; so, not knowing what he might be tempted to do in the heat of passion I immediately explained my position, briefly described my narrow escape from death in the raging flood and how I had been taken in by his daughter, who had been a Good Samaritan indeed.

His face softened a little after hearing my explanation, though I could still detect suspicion in his gray eye, and knew he was wondering what could have taken me upon the river after dark, and with a storm threatening; but I had framed up a nice little concoction that would cover this point, and at the first opportunity I meant to casually introduce it to strengthen my case.

Mr. Shipley, I fancied, did not look overly well pleased at seeing me, though we had met only once before, and then as comparative strangers; but possibly he may have heard some mention of me from either Tressie or her father, and chose to look upon me in the light of an obstruction to some delightful plan he nursed, connected with that same little maid—I hoped his cold manner did not indicate suspicion with regard to my real identity, for that would tend to make my mission less hopeful of success.

The sound of voices brought Tressie upon the scene, and it was wonderful how the countenance of the old captain softened at sight of the one being in all the wide world for whom he seemed to care; when I saw him kiss her affectionately I writhed under the thought that possibly it must be my hand that would bring trouble upon her head; but a stern sense of my obligations to my Chief allowed of no other course—if it must be so I should have to take my medicine, I supposed.

He would not allow her to stay up beyond a few minutes, saying that he could look after the wants of his guests, since fortunately there were plenty of bedrooms in the bungalow.

So it was that the three of us were sitting before the fire, for like myself the captain and his companion had evidently been splashed thoroughly in making the island, and wished to dry off, as well as warm up, before retiring.

I learned that they had started early enough, but were overtaken by the sudden blow, and forced at one time to take shelter on a small island where there was no habitation; I judged that the captain had catered to the fears of his companion until finally it became so cold and disagreeable that even Shipley grudgingly consented to complete the run, taking chances rather than put in the balance of the night in misery.

Of course we talked of various matters, for I was supposed to be a gentleman of some means, and deeply interested in sport; so it happened that presently the subject of aeroplanes came to the surface, and quite naturally I evinced considerable curiosity with regard to the proposed flight which the captain expected to make shortly, to decide the heavy wager between members of the club—he would have considered it suspicious if I had not shown interest in his project, and it is always the design of a Secret Service man to appear perfectly normal.

Besides, I would not object to knowing something more about his anticipated trip across the broad river, which seperated two nations, and had never, as far as known, witnessed the flight of a bird-man.

Morgan immediately became enthused, and it was plain to be seen that no matter what side issues he might be engineering, his heart was certainly in the hazardous game he now pursued; such a calling awoke sentiments that had always been a part of his nature, and the very fact that danger soared aloft with him every time he took his life in his hand and headed toward the cloudline added piquancy to the dish.

He described his machine in detail, and told how it differed radically from all others that had as yet been brought into use; with the pride of an inventor his lip curled when he mentioned the work of his rivals who had made names for themselves in public marts, and predicted that before another year the Morgan biplane would be miles in advance of everything that flew.

"What would happen in case your engine gave out when you were over the river?" I asked, desirous of feeding this inordinate pride in his production.

"Such a thing might of course happen, but in case it did the machine would float gently down to the water; meantime one movement would detach the motor from the plane, so that while the motor must sink it would be buoyed, and could be later on recovered. As to the plane, that would float easily enough—I have provided for that," with a suggestive smile, "and bear me up until assistance came. But there is not one chance in a dozen that such an accident can happen while I am running the Osprey," he replied; and somehow, I was impressed with the belief that there was a hidden meaning back of those words and that confident look.

CHAPTER IV.

PLAINLY BEWITCHED.

Captain Morgan was apparently determined to make things as comfortable for us as the limitations of the bungalow allowed; he even insisted upon brewing a pot of coffee, deploring the fact that he chanced to have nothing stronger on hand; and when the scent of the same permeated the room it certainly was delicious, especially to men who had recently been struggling with the cold and wet, outdoors.

I had taken one cup, and fearful lest it keep me awake was bent on declining another which he had fixed for me, when his persistence aroused my suspicions, and finally I accepted it; but when the chance came to dispose of the main portion in the ashes of the fire alongside the blazing log I took advantage of it, under the vague impression that possibly my host had, in the goodness of his heart, done something to that second cup to insure my enjoying a sound slumber during the balance of the night.

Shipley had stepped over to the table in the corner of the apartment to add some sugar to his second cup, so that the opportunity opened to me which I had been quick to accept; when the captain came back with his own cup filled I was apparently draining my portion, and declared that seldom had the ambrosia tasted so delicious, a remark that caused him to chuckle with apparent pleasure.

We talked a little longer, but it was now near midnight, and time to turn in, if we expected to secure any sleep.

I yawned a dozen times, showing evidences of drowsiness so plainly that the captain grinned behind his hand; which fact, noted out of the tail of my eye, increased my suspicion.

Finally he showed me to a little den off the livingroom of the bungalow, where a cot invited repose, and then went back to take Shipley to his quarters.

I partly undressed and crawled under the blankets.

The flickering light from the log fire in the big room crept in through the opening over which some drapery was hung, and this prevented the small apartment from being wrapped in darkness.

I heard Morgan moving around for some time near by—once he came to my door and asked in a low voice if I were comfortable; but I considered it the part of wisdom to be breathing regularly just then and make no reply, upon which, to my amazement, I heard him give that significant chuckle as he turned away.

Long I lay there, once more cogitating, and things had taken such a turn that new thoughts found lodgment in my mind—could my suspicion be correct, and had Morgan put some subtle drug in that second cup—was there a hidden meaning to his remark that he was sure it would not keep me awake, as I feared—and if so what could his object be?

I was enough of a judge of men to feel positive that this adventurous lover of the open life could not descend to any such low act as to rob a guest under his roof; and consequently if there was any meaning back of his words it must have a connection with the delicate business in which I had reason to believe he was at the time engaged.

However, time would tell.

Despite my confidence in his character I could not resist the temptation to slip my little revolver under my pillow in a position where it would be most convenient to my hand in case of a sudden necessity—while half ashamed of the action in one way, it certainly did cause me to feel safer.

I noted the fact that the wind seemed to howl with less vigor than some time back, from which I gained the impression that the storm was not going to amount to a great deal after all, and that there might be a possibility of the man-bird making his flight across the water on the succeeding night, after the late moon arose to show him the way.

Well, the sooner the event occurred the better I would be pleased, for it was giving me considerable annoyance, such was the suspense connected with it, especially since I had become aware of the fact that Tressie was so much in my mind, and that I would possibly lose her by my devotion to duty.

Perhaps a whole hour passed in this way, for I had no means of telling time, and under such conditions a minute may appear to be unduly stretched out.

Then it struck me, possibly more from instinct than a positive knowledge of the fact, that some one was moving about in the bungalow; since the entire establishment was on one floor sounds might be readily expected to carry to expectant ears, if only the flurry outside ceased for a minute, which it gave no evidence of doing for accommodation.

I lay there breathing heavily and regularly, just as a man might who was sound asleep; yet I had arranged matters so that by opening my eyes a trifle I could see without the fact of my being awake being made noticeable; and it can readily be believed that when a movement at the opening that served as the doorway to my cubbyhole of a room caught my attention, I was all attention.

Some one entered with the peculiar movements of a person walking on his toes so as not to arouse a sleeper—straight toward my cot he advanced, and while of course I could not see distinctly, since the fire in the adjoining room had died down considerably, and the flickering was vague, still there was that about the outlines of the lanky figure to suggest the well known form of the dashing aeroplane inventor, Morgan.

Now he was hovering over me so that I could hear his hurried intake of breath—a hand touched my face, wandering over it, and giving me the most peculiar sensation I ever experienced, for I could not for the life of me understand what the other meant to do.

But it flashed upon me just then that he was only endeavoring to make positive that I was sound asleep; and this idea was immediately substantiated when he uttered my name in a low tone, repeating it in a louder key, until with the third effort he spoke naturally.

Did I respond? Well, hardly, since it was my object to deceive him, and make him think his clever little game of doctoring my coffee had been a success; I just lay there, and if anything drew in my breath with greater vigor, each little snort telling him that it would apparently take an earthquake to arouse me.

He did not insist after that—indeed, I could plainly hear that curious little chuckle of his that signified pleasure, as he removed his hand from my face and turned away.

I wondered what he meant to do now, and once more opened my eyes a trifle in order to keep him under observation.

When I saw him draw his hand with a sweeping gesture along his thigh, of course I knew he was striking a match; and hence I was not very much surprised to see him apply the flame to the wick of a candle which he seemed to be holding in the other hand.

Well, this was growing interesting indeed—what was there in the little den I occupied of such peculiar interest to Morgan that he would take the trouble to try and drug me, so that I might have no chance to interrupt him at his work?

Ah! I understood it all the instant I saw him look eagerly around, and then make a bee-line for the chair on which I had hung my outer garments—he meant to examine my pockets to see if he could find anything that would give the lie to my assumed character of Mr. Chauncey Odell, a gentleman of leisure and some means, whose interest in all things pertaining to aeronautics had been most pronounced, though not quite to the extent of investing any amount of capital in the new Morgan aeroplane, in which he had been performing all manner of fancy stunts at county fairs, and which he wished, so he frequently declared, though I hardly knew whether to believe him or not, to have a stock company manufacture for him.

I think I must have unconsciously chuckled about the time that idea filtered through my brain, for he suddenly turned and cast a glance in my direction, but if he could see my face at all under the circumstances, with that dim taper so far away, he must have noted the fact that my eyes were apparently closed, while I gave an additionally loud gasp, as if sighing in my sleep.

So Morgan, fully convinced that there was nothing to fear, and that it had been a false alarm, once more turned his full attention to the matter that had brought him into my chamber.

I saw him take up my coat and examine every letter, reading several dummy letters addressed to "Mr. Chauncey Odell, New Rochelle, N. Y.," which was supposed to be my home on the outskirts of the great metropolis—when I took up this game I played it to the limit, and left no loophole through which my true identity could be suspected; for this is one of the things about which men of my calling are most careful when undertaking any measure in which the risk of failure is great.

Then he went even further and looked into my pocketbook, where besides my cash I carried a few cards calculated to further my ends, and—this was what gave me so much amusement—some notes on the Morgan aeroplane as given to me that evening, marked and underscored "possibly a good investment, worth investigating further."

I never made a better bull's-eye of a shot in my life than when I jotted down those random lines just before retiring, having lighted my own candle for a brief time—really, it must have been an inspiration that caused me to do it, for at the time I did not suspect that the pleasure of a visit from my host was to be added to the amusements of the night.

How the face of Morgan lighted up as he read those hastily scribbled lines—his pride was touched, and I fancy that there may have been even something akin to real friendship in the look he bent on me after digesting my fulsome praise.

Of course that settled it, for any suspicion that he may have entertained before must have melted away after reading how I was interested in the merits of his machine, and even suggested further investigation with a possible view of investing some of my "mythical" funds in its manufacture on a commercial basis—well, it was really too bad, but if the wonderful aeroplane he had in view, as an improvement on the one he used, had to wait upon my putting up the sinews of war before it was offered to the eager public, I feared very much that the dear public would grow weary anticipating its advent on the market.

Morgan placed my clothes back just as he had found them, laughing to himself the while, as though highly pleased with his discovery; and ere he once more left the room he turned toward the cot as if to settle the last doubt as to my being asleep, or else to mentally give me his blessing, I could not decide which; but all same I took no chances, breathing louder than ever, like a man with the asthma. So he departed, believing himself wiser than when he had entered that den off the livingroom.

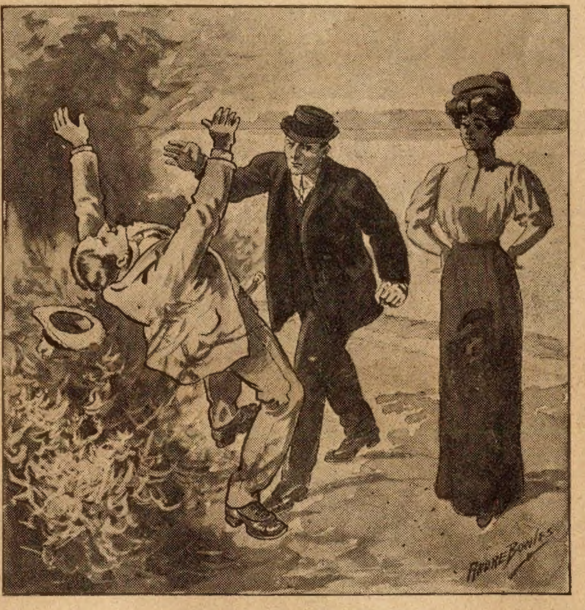
I felt that it was now up to me to get to sleep in earnest, so as to secure the refreshment I needed; things were working so well that it would appear there was no necessity for undue anxiety on my part; and if the weather permitted doubtless this perplexing puzzle might be solved before the sun arose a second time.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE CLOUDS.

Lulled by the diminishing sounds that accompanied the war of the elements outside, I finally dropped asleep that night in the bungelow, and knew nothing more until some one called in the adjoining room, when I discovered that it was full daylight, and that the sun was doing business at the same old stand, for which I felt like offering thanks.

It took me but a brief time to dress, and upon issuing forth I found that the appetizing odor of breakfast was beginning to creep through the various rooms of the one-floor building.



I hurled him amid the underbrush.

Somehow it seemed as though those viands had an unusually delightful odor on that particular morning; nor this did not spring from the fact that I felt more hungry than usual. I knew who was doing the cooking, and would have given something to look in on Tressie Morgan just then; for I could easily imagine her in her trim morning dress, with her sleeves rolled up as she made the beaten biscuits, her rounded arms tempting in their contour, and her pretty face rosy with the heat of the fire; but I dared not invade the sacred precincts of the kitchen, though strolling outside in the hope of securing just one fugitive glimpse of the attractive maid.

I could manage to see her fluttering, around inside the lean-to that served as a summer kitchen, the place not being used in the cold season; and then my arrangements were spoiled by the clang of a rude Chinese gong, beaten by Captain Morgan himself, as a means of letting his two guests know that the meal was on the table awaiting their presence. So I went in.

And let me remark right here that on the tablets of my memory that simple breakfast of hot biscuits, cereal, eggs and coffee—with that sweet face opposite me I did not envy a king his palace or his royal pomp, for I believed a man could be mighty happy could he be assured of such service every day of his life.

I was exceedingly sorry when, my capacity having been reached, I had to absolutely decline a further helping of those delicious biscuits, even when offered to me by Tressie herself, and with her sunny smile back of the dish; but there was a limit, and I feared it had been reached some time before.

By the way, I had made up my mind that Shipley was indeed just as much smitten with the girl as myself; for he bent many a dark look in my direction when he believed I was not observing, and I fancied that he even gritted his white teeth after watching me smile toward Tressie—really the pangs of jealousy must be hard to bear, if that fellow's actions were any indication as to the state of his mind; never having been there myself I cannot speak from experience, nor do I want to.

As for Morgan himself, he was unusually happy that morning, and favored me with many of his attentions, though I felt very much like a confidence man who had been working upon the credulity of the public, and was receiving certain goods to which he had not the faintest right.

However, business is business, and frequently we men of the Secret Service have to do our work regardless of the tools employed, keeping before us the end to be gained and not the means. Morgan was a shrewd fellow, and any one who overreached him, where wits were concerned, deserved all he got; and if the girl could have been eliminated from the game I do not think I should have been troubled with many scruples.

The river looked natural with the sunlight dancing from the tips of the myriads of little wavelets; so that it was hard to believe that just a few hours back it had been the scene of such riotous commotion, and that possibly Death rode in the storm that swept out of the lake above, heading toward the coast far away.

Morgan had secured the extra piece belonging to his aeroplane, for which he had come, and was bound for the Canadian shore, intending to take Tressie along, and leave only faithful old Tige to guard the vacated bungalow that had so kindly been placed at his disposal by the absent owner.

As that was also my destination, of course I was only too well pleased to declare I meant to accompany them—which avowal made Morgan grin with pleasure, Shipley frown and bite his thin lips, and Tressie—well, I could not see what sort of expression flitted over her plump face, for she immediately turned away with a fragment of music on her lips, and busied herself about some little task connected with the flitting; but I flattered myself with the belief that she was at least not sorry, for she must have known the state of my feelings by this time, the little rogue; and that I was bound a captive to her chariot wheels, ready to do anything on earth to please her—that is, anything but prove false to my oath to serve the Government at Washington above all else.

She then consented, with her father's permission, to grace my boat with her presence, as we rowed across the intervening stretch of rushing water, a proceeding that was very delightful to me, but gave poor Shipley another jolt, as I could tell from the thermometrical indications on his long face.

All too soon the voyage came to an end, as we landed at the dock of the Country Club, where in the season, many boats could be found; but just now, as most of the members had gone back to the city, the scene was not so lively; in fact, besides a few hunters who were making preparations to go up into the Muskoka and Nipissing country after deer and moose, those who lingered were mostly devotees of the new sport of aviation, and interested in the big wager connected with a flight between two widely separated points on either side of the St. Lawrence River.

I knew some of these good fellows, having been a guest at the club house before, and they showed at least a decent pleasure at seeing me again, from which I was justified in infering that my company had proved congenial on that other occasion. This pleased me, because I had an idea I might wish to take advantage of their friendship before the day was gone.

An open place had been especially arranged for giving exhibitions of short flights with all manner of airships, from a big dirigible that was housed in an aerodrome near by, to a monoplane in which an enthusiastic amateur was daily risking his precious neck, in the hope of becoming as daring a navigator of the upper air regions, as a Santos Dumont, Grahame-White, or a Wright.

And that morning, as the wind seemed to have quieted down to a soft zephyr, there was a bustle among these air craft, and everybody seemed busy doing something or other along the line of contemplated flights; though in many cases, as so often happens, it ended in "getting ready," for their nerve failed them when the critical moment to mount upward arrived.

Among the number present I had my eye on one particular individual by the name of Harry Breen; he was part owner of the dirigible, and at one time had even asked me to go up with him when making a flight; I had not accepted because just then my business chained me to earth; but conditions were different now, and I was glad I had promised to accompany him at some future time. I had reason to believe the hour was near at hand now.

I noted the fact that the dirigible was ready for business, gas having been procured from the nearest station; and yet so far as I could see there was no move on the part of the owner, looking to an immediate ascent.

Putting two and two in line I began to guess that the preparations may have had something to do with the big wager made as to Morgan being able to fly across the St. Lawrence by moonlight, and reach a certain place where he must make a landing.

And no sooner had this thought come to me than I determined that if it were at all possible, I would be a passenger in the dirigible when the start was made, for it was very important to my mind that I should be present when the aeroplane came to earth.

Now, Breen was something of an inventive genius himself, and he had installed a new kind of engine aboard his aerial craft with which he claimed he was able to lead any other flier a race, even a swift moving biplane; his belief in his machine to do the work was absolute; but the trouble was, he had such a reputation for being a dare-devil, ready to take abnormal risks, that as a usual thing, no one would go up with him, backing out when the time came.

Knowing this, I approached Breen in a breezy way, greeting him warmly, and at once remarking: "Say, do you know that I have been kicking myself more than once for not accepting that chance you gave me of going for a spin in your machine? If you ever feel like asking me again, by George! I'm going to take you at your word, d'ye hear?"

He smiled and looked at me queerly.

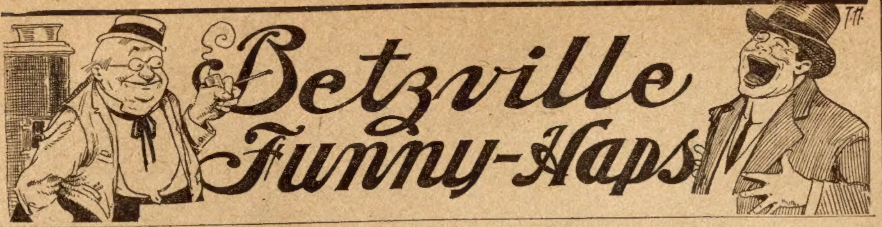
"Would you mind promising that?" he said, quietly, and while I could easily suspect what was coming, I did not wince an atom while exclaiming: "I give you my word, and I never broke it with any man."

"All right, then," he laughed, as he clapped me on the arm, "the chance is going to arrive sooner than you thought, my son. Possibly even this very night you may realize your ambition to soar through space; for I suppose, like most people, you have often dreamed of doing such a thing."

"Tonight—you mean by moonlight—say, has this anything to do with the wager business?" I demanded, as though greatly surprised.

"It certainly has a great deal to do with it. In fact, I am paid to go up immediately after Morgan starts, and follow him as closely as I can, so as to make positive that he complies with every condition of the flight. Between you and I, Odell, there is a bigger amount wagered on this affair than most people suspect, and some of the boys have none too good an opinion of our genial friend, Captain Morgan—you know he has ever been a roving blade, looking on the world as his oyster which he opens whenever the humor seizes him; and we are afraid he may have been brought up by the opposition to play a smart game on us if necessary. I have a few thousand against the success of the undertaking myself, and I don't mean to lose out through chicanery, not if my bully old dirigible will do what is expected of her. And while I ask you not to breathe a word of this to a living soul, for only five of us are in the game, you are booked for passage over the river to-

(Continued on page eighteen.)



M'DOOBLE BITES A SNAKE

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER; Author of "Pigs Is Pigs," etc.

[Copyright by W. G. Chapman.]

MY COUNSIN, Orone McDooble, of Betzville, had a narrow escape from death last Wednesday night, and he might be dead now, if it hadn't been for his quickness of mind, and his knowledge of natural history. My Cousin Orone had been spending a few hours at Slug Wilson's Palace bar in this village, and about one o'colck in the morning he started for home, and something in the sort of sinuous way he was wandering up the street made him think of snakes. Perhaps he had had snakes in mind before that; I don't know. Anyway, when he reached home he had his mind pretty full of snakes and eels and lizards and reptiles and serpents generally, and was feeling mighty worried about them, and thinking that something ought to be done about it for the good of the public, and just then he heard his chickens squawking in the hen house, and it came to his mind that there might be a boa-constrictor or a phtyon eating his best poultry that very minute. So he started down the side path to his hen house on a run.

Just as he got half-way there and was passing under the apple tree at full trot, a great big serpent swung down out of the tree and darted at him. It missed his face by an inch, but its long cold body struck him across the cheek, and Cousin Orone McDooble fell like a shot. He dropped right flat on his back, and he lay there staring up at the serpent that was swinging from the limb above him, ready to make another spring at him any moment, and he was so scared he did not dare to breathe. He just lay there and riveted his eyes to the head of that serpent.

The next morning he found that it was only the rubber garden hose, which his wife had draped over the limb to dry, but he didn't have the slightest suspicion of it as he lay under the tree, and he had a right to be scared. Anybody would be scared to have a slithy garden hose swinging just above his head that way, ready any minute to drop down and bite. Nothing is so venomous as the bite of a garden-hose at one o'clock in the morning. So Cousin Orone McDooble just lay there and gazed that garden-hose steadily in the eye. He didn't take his eye off it for a moment, and he didn't move a muscle. He didn't even breathe.

Then suddenly a cold chill passed over him. He realized that the gardner-hose was trying to fascinate him with its glittering eyes, as serpents always fascinate birds they mean to devour in a minute or two. He tried to take his eyes away, and he couldn't; and he tried to flutter his wings, and he couldn't; and so he just uttered a couple of mournful little chirps and peeps and kept gazing at the cruel nozzle of the garden-hose, and hoped death would be painless when the garden-hose swallowed him. But he couldn't stand it. It got on his nerves. He wept when he thought that he was nothing but a poor little sparrow so near his doom, and when he saw he didn't have the slightest chance against the wily serpent he thought he'd better be an ostrich, rather than a sparrow, for he would have a better chance in a fight for life. So he squawked as near like an ostrich as he could, and stuck his head in a water pail that was handy, as ostriches always hide their heads when danger threatens. Every little while he peeped out to see if the serpent had gone away, but it hadn't. There it hung with its glittering eye on him every time.

If it hadn't been for Cousin Orone McDooble's knowledge of natural history he would have been devoured by the garden-hose long before that, but knowing about ostriches, and turning into one, had postponed his death, because a garden-hose has to swell up considerably before it can swallow on ostrich. And just then was when Cousin McDooble's natural history knowledge came to his aid, for the memory of the East Indian mongoose returned to his mind. He knew that the mongoose is kept as a pet by many Hindoos to kill serpents, and that very mintue he decided that the best thing he could do was to be a mongoose. So he did.

The only thing that troubled him was that he didn't know what a mongoose looked like or how it acted or what kind of a noise it made. He couldn't, to save his life, remember whether it was a bird or a beast, but he was pretty sure it wasn't a fish. A fish wouldn't be much good at running around a house chasing snakes. But Cousin Orone McDooble did the best he could, and it worked pretty well, for a garden-hose isn't particular what kind of noise an imitation mongoose makes, just so it makes a good loud noise. So Cousin Orone McDooble got down on his hands and knees and made a noise like a mongoose. It was something like a dog and something like a hyena. And every three yelps he snarled and showed his teeth and jumped at the garden-hose.

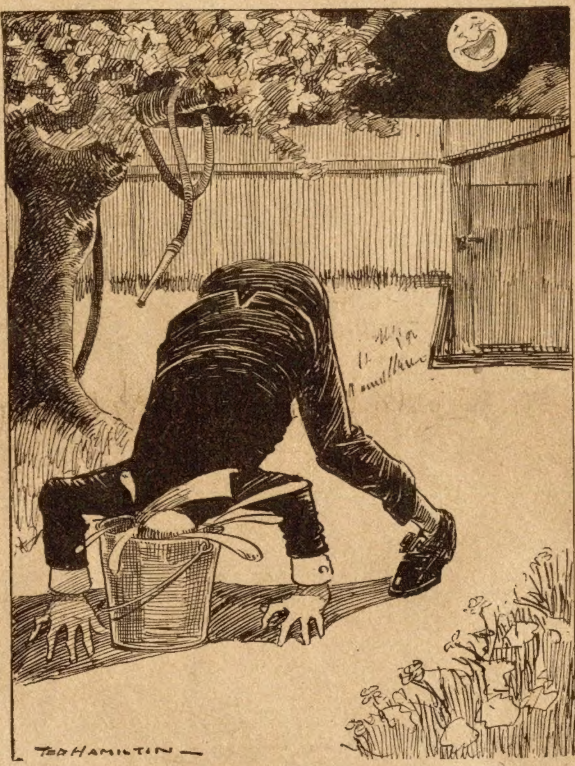
The garden-hose just hung there as silent and still as the grave and glared him in the eye! And the more it glared the madder Cousin Mongoose McDooble got. He farily bounced around under the garden-hose on his hands and knees, snarling and snapping, and all at once he jumped right up and bit the garden-hose in the neck! And the garden-hose bit back!

That almost settled Cousin Orone Mongoose, for all at once he remembered something he had forgot, which was that the mongoose, before fearlessly attacking a serpent, neutralizes the poison by eating the Ophiorhiza Mungos; and he had forgotten to eat any! So he dashed away and bit a piece off a rhubarb plant, and then dashed back and bit the garden-hose, and he kept it up until on one round trip the spigot of the nozzle caught in his pocket and as he ran the garden-hose leaped out of the tree and went leaping after him. My, but Cousin Orone McDooble was scared! He jumped right into the rhubarb patch and ate three whole plants before he was sure he had eaten enough poison antidote, but but once he was sure he was no more afraid of that garden-hose than I would be. He lay right down flat and seized it by the nozzle, and wrapped his legs around it, and chewed, growling like a pup with a slippery bone.

It was a struggle for life or death, and Cousin Orone McDooble chewed eighteen feet of that rubber garden-hose before he was sure it was dead, but when he was sure it was dead he was the happiest mongoose that ever killed a garden-hose. He got up on his hands and knees and capered around the yard uttering short, sharp barks of joy, and then, not feeling sure that all the serpents in Betzville were dead, and that he ought to protect his poultry at all hazards, he went into the henhouse and went to sleep.

And the next morning he couldn't remember for the life of him whether he was a rooster or a mongoose, and he might never have had the heart to come out of the henhouse if he hadn't thought of compromising. So he barked like a mongoose three times and crowed twice, and let it go at that.

Next week's Ledger will contain another of these extremely funny Betzville stories by the famous humorist, Ellis Parker Butler. We have more than a dozen of Mr. Butler's funny stories, so look out for them. They are the best ever. Get the Ledger sure or you will miss a great treat.



Squawked like an ostrich and stuck his head in a water pail.

* * *

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Slain on the Stage;

Or, The Minna Gorsden Mystery

By GEORGE T. HARGREAVES

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE GANGSTERS EMPLOYED.

PHIL PRY came slowly back to consciousness to find his head aching and a heavy, sickening odor round about him. It was quite dark, though the faintest streak of light showed beneath the threshold of what was evidently a door.

He rose to a sitting posture and slowly fingering about disocvered that he had been reclining on a couch. He raised one hand to his head in an effort to alleviate the throbbing pain ,and found a protuberance had swollen up. Then he recalled how he had sustained it. The soubrette had hurled a paper weight at him.

When he sought to rise to his feet, he discovered that they were firmly bound. Painfully he leaned over to loosen whatever was confining his legs.

Running his hand down to his ankle, he came upon a hard, scaly surface. There was something so repellent in the touch that he drew his hand quickly away.

He became conscious next of a soft, peculiar sound close by, as of something being sifted over the floor. There was something in the sensation that made him shudder.

He hastily clapped a hand on his hip pocket where he knew his revolver had last been. He felt relieved when he found that it had not been removed.

Again his hand went slowly back to the bonds at his feet. This time he felt a slight, undulating motion there. With appalling distinctness the solution of his situation came to him.

He was confined in this apparently narrow room with Annabelle Wesson's snake, which had wound itself so securely about his feet that he could not move!

Phil had to grip himself firmly. Weakened by the blow that had rendered him unconscious, he felt it would be easy to drop off into insensibility again from this second shock. But he shook his head as if to clear away the pain there and to set himself to combat the perils of this new and threatening predicament.

Oh, if he had only a light, he thought that he might get a view of his prison, and particularly of this scaly serpent that had wrapped itself about him until he was practically helpless.

He felt eagerly in his pockets for a match. He found one. He raised it to strike its sulphured end along the wall.

Then suddenly he recalled two things that made him instantly desist. It would be wise for him to feign unconsciousness for a time longer, anyway, in the hope of hearing some illuminating conversation beyond the confines of this den. Likewise, he imagined that a sudden light might drive the snake into a frenzy in which he would not be able to escape those dreadful fangs which appeared not to have sunk their poison into him as yet.

Still he sat there in unspeakable dread. He knew not at what instant he would feel this writhing serpent about his body. He could not see when it would poise its agile head and dart its dose of death into his face.

Co-incidentally came the thought that he must abandon Janet Price, his sweetheart, in her present extremity. He had no idea how long he had lain in this spell of unconsciousness, but he was certain it was long enough to enable Chester Hawkins full opportunity to practise some of his dastardiy wiles upon his fiancee.

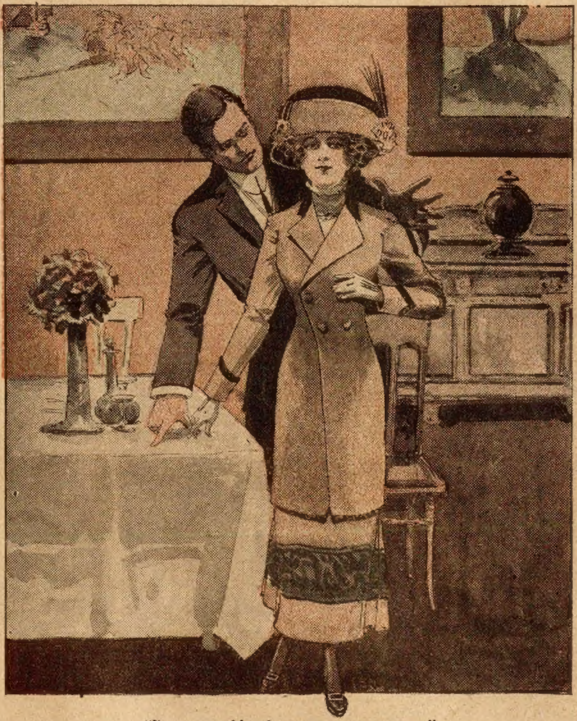
He fairly perspired in the agony of his predicament. He had faced many and varied dangers in his previous detective work, but none that in daring and vindictiveness could compare with this.

He understood its purpose thoroughly. He had got so close to the murderer of Minna Gorsden that it was necessary that he be put out of the way until a plan of escape could be settled upon. Moreover, his deductions led him to this conclusion: Either Annabelle Wesson or Chester Hawkins had killed the actress.

Made almost frantic by the terror of his situation, he was about to rise and beat upon the wall in the hope of raising an alarm that would release him, when the tinkle of a bell in an adjoining room caught his ear.

Slowly edging forward on his couch, he was finally able to rest upon its edge. From there he unsteadily raised himself to his feet. He expected every instant to feel the coils of the snake rising about him, but he gritted his teeth and tried to pierce the almost stygian darkness surrounding him.

When he found he could stand firmly, he carefully thrust out his arms in front of him and above the thin line of light he had seen upon the floor. A wave of gratification passed through him as his fingers came in contact with the panels of a door.



"I've never kissed a newspaper woman."

Before he could feel for the knob, a voice reached him. Its tones, although low, were familiar. They were Chester Hawkins'. Then they ceased, to be answered by another voice, softer and clearer. He recognized this more easily. Annabelle Wesson was without also.

Phil swayed cautiously forward until he could bring an ear close to the door. Then he braced himself to listen.

"You mean to say you've got the fool locked up here?" he heard Hawkins say in amazement.

"In there." He recognized the soubrette's voice, and could imagine her pointing toward the door behind which he stood.

"How in thunder did you subdue him like that?" demanded the actor.

"Fired a paper weight at his head when he got nasty. It caught him on the temple and floored him like a log. Sweetie darted for him, too, and if I hadn't squeezed her neck so hard that I thought I had killed her, she'd have sunk her fangs in his face. Then he'd have croaked sure."

"You ought to have those fangs cut out or get rid of the thing. Some day you'll be feeling them sink into your own skin, and then it'll be all over," warned Hawkins.

Annabelle laughed incredulously.

"Pshaw," she replied, "I've had Sweetie for five years now, and though she acts peevish and nervous at times she's never shown the least intention of being nasty with me. I'm not afraid of her."

"That's all right to say," grunted the actor, "but you remember the lion tamer who went into the cage for ten years and was then killed. These d——— snakes are ten times worse than lions."

"But I can always control Sweetie with my eyes," declared the soubrette confidently.

"Yes, those d——— hypnotic eyes of yours," Phil found it easy to imagine the heat with which Hawkins spoke. His voice was full of anger as he went on: No wonder you can conquer snakes with them when you can conquer humans so easily. Look how you've got me snarled up with them."

"Oh, we'llget out of this all right," the woman laughed harshly. "Trust me for that."

The reporter held his breath in suspense for fear he would miss a word. He felt that he was on the point of hearing disclosures that would clear up

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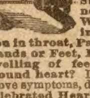

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the Gorsden murder. Moreover, that expression of Hawkins, "those d——— hypnotic eyes of yours" kept surging back and forth in his brain.

"Well, what are you going to do with him now that you have got him locked up? And what's the use of keeping him, anyway?" snarled the actor.

"The use? The use?" Annabelle cried. "Why, that fellow has got enough on us to lock us up as suspects. Of course, he can't prove that either of us is guilty—that we did it, because we didn't; but he could make it mighty unpleasant, and if we let him loose he might get on to the real secret."

"What does he know that is so blamed dangerous?" blurted Hawkins.

Whereupon the soubrette detained at length the interview between the reporter and herself.

"A mighty pretty fix we're in," was thhe angry comment of the actor when she had finished. "We've got to get rid of him, that's sure."

"Let me turn loose Sweetie on him before he recovers consciousness," suggested the woman earnestly.

Even as she spoke, Phil, in his strained position, heard anew that strange brushing of the floor. He knew now what it was. The snake was coiling about, possibly making ready to attack him. He tried to loosen his feet, but the bonds were still tight. He wondered how it would feel when the serpent began to twine upward about his body.

"No, that won't do," blared the actor. "What'd we do with a corpse like his up here?"

"Sh-sh," she warned, "you'll waken him before we're ready. But why not let Sweetie strike him? I could say it was an accident."

"No, I won't stand for any more of this killing business. It's got me near a wreck now. I made a mistake to lug that girl off."

Phil crushed his ear still closer to the door, at what he knew was a reference to Janet.

"How is she?" Annabelle asked.

"D——— her," was the actor's bitter response.

"It's d——— quiet in there," he went on, after a grimace. "Do you suppose the snake's sunk into him?"

"Oh, no. I took good care of that. Tied its tail about his feet with my ribbons, and tied its head in the heavy silk sack. Sweetie'll scare him out of his wits when he comes to, but won't do him any more harm."

Hearing which, Phil breathed more easily. He carefully reached down and felt the ribbons binding the tail of the serpent to his feet.

"Well, what shall we do with him?" the actress pressed. "We can't keep him here much longer."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Hawkins, after a pause. "I'll get the gangsters to waylay him as he goes out of here."

"What are gangsters?" asked Annabelle.

Hawkins chuckled loudly enough for the confined reporter to note the trace of spite in his voice.

"Gangsters," he answered deliberately, "are the gentlemen we hire to do our dirty work for us."

"You mean you can buy these men to wound and kill others?" blurted the soubrette.

"Exactly," responded Hawkins.

"Then why didn't we hire some of them to——"

The reporter, breathlessly waiting to hear the finish of the sentence, heard instead a sound as of a hand clapped down over a too impulsive mouth.

"None of that," growled Hawkins. "Haven't you ever heard that walls have ears?"

"But I thought——"

"Don't," was the actor's almost savage rejoinder.

"And what will these gangsters do to this man Pry?"

"Anything I pay them for. For a battered face, ten dollars; for a broken arm, twenty-five dollars; for a broken leg, fifty dollars; for a fractured skull, one hundred dollars; for a job that leaves the victim a corpse, two hundred and fifty to a thousand dollars, according to the importance of the individual. Oh, they're a handy gang, all right. There's just one trouble in dealing with them," and Hawkins ended with a laugh.

"And that?"

"You must pay them cash in advance."

"And you really mean to say that you can hire these gangs to commit murder? I can't believe it."

"Proof is easy, my girl. I'll call one of them on the phone shortly, and arrange for the disposition of this interloper you've got behind your door."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GANGSTERS ELUDED.

With aching head, bound feet, and a venomous snake thrashing around dangerously near him, Phil now had added to his troubles the prospect of an encounter with one of those crime-hardened gangs of New York City who thrive on the letting of blood.

He had run up against one of them before. In his confined quarters, eagerly listening for the words that would tell him how serious was the danger he must face, he recalled how the Tim Blakeley gang, noted on the West Side for its boldness and cruelty, had tried for a month to "get him" for a story he had written in the Star about a divorce suit, and how they had finally cornered him unawares, and before he could draw his revolver, pounded him up so badly that he was confined to the hospital for nearly a month.

He wasn't afraid, but he bewailed any encounter that would imperil the success of his task in solving the Minna Gorsden murder. He seemed so close upon the key to the mystery that even an hour's intereference with the continuance of his present pursuit would be aggravating, not to say perilous.

Moreover, he was beginning to have some apprehension about the safety of his sweetheart Miss Price. From the conversation of Chester Hawkins, which he had just now luckily overheard, he was forced to decide the actor an even more abandoned character than he had believed from the statements of Minna Gorsden's frantic mother, or from the more conservative description of the veteran Torrey.

More than an hour had now passed since Janet had disappeared from the Thespis Theater. From what he had heard Hawkins tell Miss Wesson, he had to believe that Miss Price had been within his power all that time, and was still under his control. It made him nervous to think of what wrongs a consummate villain like the handsome actor might practice in that time upon a defenseless girl. Surely it was time for him to get out of his predicament.

As he sank back on the couch from his unnatural and tiring position against the door, he heard the ring of a telephone bell. At once he was all attention.

Hawkins' voice had asked for the connection, and when it had been obtained, Phil heard him ask: "That you, Muggsy?"

The reply must have been satisfactory, for the actor immediately proceeded: "This is Hawkins, Chester Hawkins, up on West Sixtieth street, No. 99. I've got a little job for you. Can you take care of it right away?"

Again the answer that came back over the wire must have pleased the actor, for he laughed back: "Why a clip on the head with a blackjack, hard enough to put a man in the hospital for a week or two, and keep him unconscious for a while will suit me. What's the tax?"

In the short pause, Phil's hand involuntarily went to his head. He wondered how it would feel to get a crack upon the skull from a blackjack in the hands of a villainous gangster.

"One hundred and twenty-five? Oh, that's too much," he heard Hawkins haggle. "I thought your price was an even hundred."

The reporter could not repress a grin as he listened to the dicker over his own fate.

"Well, I'll give you the hundred even, and that's all. Oh, yes, it'll be ready for you when you show up.—The man? Sure, it's Phil Pry, the reporter on the Star who's been running down a lot of mysteries lately. Pretty shrewd fellow, I understand. What does he look like? Oh, quite a serious-faced young man. Appears more like a quiet student than a bustling reporter. Dressed in light gray with a brown derby hat. Wears a blue silk tie with a beautiful emerald in his stickpin. About five feet, ten. Straight as an arm. Walks like an army officer. Quick as a cat. Yes, you can tell him by his eyes alone. They're a green gray and shine like a pair of brilliants. Seem to see more in a minutet than most eyes do in an hour. Think you'll know him now?"

Again the reply must have satisfied Hawkins, for he chuckled as he went on in a voice sunk so low that Phil had difficulty in hearing his words:

"Yes, get up as quick as you can. How many'll you bring? Three besides yourself? Good! I want you to make sure of the job. If you don't I'll queer your trade. Yes, I'll come down with the dough as soon as you tip me the word by the hall boy. And five minutes after I come down, look sharp for your man. How soon'll you be here? Twenty minutes? All right. Goodby."

An ordinary man in Phil's extremity would undoubtedly have begun to feel weak in the knees at these grewsome preparations for his punishment. But the reporter was of different mettle. He passed his hand over his hot brow to clear away the fever burning there. Then he clinched his hands with a vow to give these cowardly plotters against him the best fight left in his wearied body.

He summoned to his aid his acute ability as a strategist. He felt that if he was to win out now, it must be by his wits and not by his muscle. Accordingly, he lay back upon the couch and assumed an attitude of insensibility.

"I must give them the idea that I have bee absolutely unconscious during all this interesting palaver which I have been lucky enough to hear," he decided.

Then, ere he had opportunity to settle on any further plan, he heard the lock in the door gently snapped back. There was a silent pause before the door was slowly pushed open and a light step crossed the threshold.

Phil did not even dare to peer up with screened lids. But he distinctly felt a sharp tug at his legs and an increased

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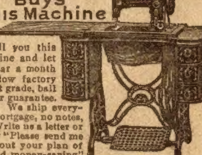

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brushing of the floor that had struck him as so unusual when he first returned to consciousness.

"Still, be still, Sweetie," he heard the soubrette coo.

He needed no sight then to inform him of what was transpiring. The actress was loosening the serpentine bonds on his feet, meanwhile quieting her crawling pet. It was hard for him to keep from taking a deep inspiration of relief when he found his ankles were once more free and that Miss Wesson, having gathered up the writhing reptile in its silken bag, was removing it from its place of confinement.

But she was back in a moment, this time accompanied by Hawkins. The pair peered closely into Phil's face. Unsatisfied, the actor lighted an electric bulb on the wall. Again the two bent over and studied the reporter's features.

"Still dead to the world," whispered the actor. "You must have given him an awful welt. Bring me some cold water. I'll try to bring him around."

While Annabelle was obeying his instructions, Hawkins gently ran his hand over the feigning reporter's clothes. He came at length to his hip pocket. There he felt Phil's revolver.

"Humph," he muttered, "ready for business, wasn't he?"

The Star man had to exercise the utmost self-restraint. He felt like rising up and grabbing Hawkins by the throat as he perceived that his precious weapon was being slowly drawn from his pocket. Yet he promptly decided that his greatest safety remained in absolute quiet.

The actor slipped the revolver into his own side pocket, and then turned to the soubrette as she appeared with a jug of water and a towel. Wetting the latter, Hawkins gently stroked Phil's face. The cool touch was like a tonic to the prostrate man, but he merely breathed deeply under it. Then, with studied pretense, he slowly raised one hand an let it settle on his head at the spot where the weapon of the actress had landed.

"Coming to," nervously ejaculated the actor, again moistening and applying the towel.

At this the reporter opened his eyes waveringly and rolled them up unseeingly—as clever a bit of acting as Hawkins had ever done on the stage.

The actor thrust his arm beneath the shoulder of the reporter, raised him carefully, and drew him out of the narrow room, depositing him in an easy chair in the apartment in which Phil had confronted Miss Wesson.

"Get that damned snake out of here quick," ordered Hawkins, roughly. "And you make yourself scarce, too. I'll try a little mental science on him when he comes to fully, and make him believe he's had a fit and that his chatter with you was all an idle dream."

As the soubrette carefully withdrew with her pet, Phil opened his eyes wide, but in a vague stare. He drew his hand across his brow as if to remove some unpleasant thoughts, and then looked wonderingly at the actor, who stood over him with a cynical smile curling his handsome features.

"Coming out of it, eh?" said the actor. "Nasty fall you had."

"That so?" returned Phil, weakly. "I don't seem to remember just how it happened. Where am I, anyway?" and looked around bewildered.

"Why, I picked you up just after you had fallen on the stone steps below," declared Hawkins with earnestness. "Must have struck your head an awful crack, for you've been 'out' for half an hour. Do you have these spells often?"

"Strange," muttered Phil, "never had anything like this before." He straightened himself up stiffly. "But I'm feeling all right now. Guess I'll be moving on."

"Oh, wait, wait a few moments," urged the actor, as he gently pushed the reporter back. "Get all over it before you go. Then I'll go down and get a cab for you to go home in."

Phil ran his hand slowly over his clothes. At his hip pocket he paused and looked up wonderingly.

"I've lost my gun," he said steadily, watching the actor's face twitch under the thrust.

"Maybe it dropped out of your pocket when you fell," suggested Hawkins, a bit lamely.

"Couldn't," retorted the Star man sharply. "That pocket is always buttoned. And I know I had it when I came up here, for I felt it when I was considering how to kill that blamed snake."

"What snake?"

"Why, the snake I saw the woman up here petting."

"You're dreaming, young man," Hawkins laughed jeeringly. "There's no snake up here except me. And there's no woman at all except the maid. You must have got that idea in your head since you've been unconscious."

Phil looked unconvinced, but allowed the actor to congratulate himself inwardly on the success of his ruse.

"Well, I'm obliged to you for your kindness in my predicament,' 'he said, getting slowly to his feet. "I'll be going now."

"No, no, wait till I call a cab," insisted the actor, and he hurried toward the door.

"Why not use the telephone for that, Mr. Hawkins?" shot out the reporter, with a glance that brought the actor to an abrupt pause. He looked back at the Star man with an expression half puzzled, half fearful. Just as Phil had intended, he suddenly found himself confronted with an impression that his bit of mental science was not a complete success, that this peculiar young man had not been imposed upon—that there was danger in the uncanny penetration of his eyes.

But it made him all the more anxious to get to the street. He did not intend that Phil should leave until the gangsters had reached a vantage point from which to wield their blackjacks.

"There's an honest chap who hangs out just around the corner," he explained lamely. "I want to get him so as to be sure you will be taken home safely," and before Phil could reply the actor was gone.

"Now's my chance," muttered the reporter and grabbing up his hat he made his way hurriedly through intervening rooms until he reached the hall door. But the lock was snapped and he could not release it. He wrenched at the knob violently, but the door would not give. As he bethought himself of other means of egress, Hawkins returned breathless.

"It's all right," he panted. "You'll find the cab at the front door below."

"Very well, Mr. Hawkins," snapped Phil, as he stepped into the outer hall. "But I'd really like to have my revolver," he added, as a parting, discomposing shot.

The reporter, conscious that he was about to face dreaded gangsters, who had already been paid for some unknown but dangerous injury upon him, paused ere he called the elevator. Then, as if to give himself more time in which to frame some plan of defense, he started to descend the stairs of the apartment building.

Half way down a subterfuge came to him. Closing his hand over some coins in his pocket, he marched confidently to the uniformed hall boy stationed at the foot of the elevator.

"Son," said Phil quickly, as he drew forth a silver dollar and extended it toward the boy, "can you show me a way out without going through the front door?"

The boy grinned and reached for the dollar.

"Sure, boss, I'll put you through the delivery door in the rear."

Whereupon the reporter, with a secret gloat that he had escaped "Muggsy" Halligan and his crew of desperate waylayers, followed the hall boy into the basement and out through a rear entrance that landed him in a narrow court. He hurried through this and found himself in West Sixty-first street.

With a sigh of relief, he looked about for some trace of a foe, but he saw no one save a solitary patrolman at the Broadway corner.

"And now for Janet," he exclaimed fervently.

CHAPTER XV.

IN AN ACTOR'S DEN.

And what had been Janet Price's experience since Phil had parted from her at the Thespis Theater, more than an hour before?

Following his trip to the telephone to talk with the chief of police, she had settled herself to watch Chester Hawkins and Annabelle Wesson, for with a woman's intuition, she continued to see hints of a secret understanding in the sly, speaking glances they exchanged.

The rehearsal concluded, the pair left the stage together and sought the street. Janet hung close on their trail. She noticed Miss Wesson turn her head about and glance back at her once or twice, but she did not suspect that her surveillance was observed until Hawkins and the actress, having completed a languid promenade around the square, began to cover the same ground again. Then she realized that the pair were cognizant of her pursuit.

Yet she could not afford to give it up. Phil had settled in her mind the conviction that these two stagefolk must be closely watched if the Gorsden tragedy was to be solved, and she did not propose, in her lover's absence, to fail to neglect a single instruction.

So she continued to trail Hawkins and the soubrette on their journey around the square. Ths, too, was almost completed, when, in the shadow of an elevated railway pillar in Seventh avenue, she noticed the couple stop. Hawkins proceeded onward after a moment, but Miss Wesson remained motionless, until Janet, deciding that it were safer to continue her walk than to openly betray herself as a watcher, walked on past her.

"Here, here, young woman," the actress muttered, catching Janet by the sleeve and forcing her to stop, "what do you mean by following me about the streets like this?"

"Following you?" responded the girl noncommittally.

"Sure, ever since we left the stage of the Thespis."

Janet gave way to a silvery laugh.

"You must have some good reason to suspect that you are thus closely watched," she said insinuatingly.

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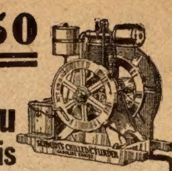

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You can learn almost as much from animals as you can from humans—and it won't cost you one-third as much.

"That's neither here nor there," the soubrette flared angrily. "I don't intend to be watched by any fresh young hussy."

"That's all right," returned the girl, keeping her temper under admirable control. "I am neither fresh nor a hussy."

"Well, will you quit it?" demanded the woman of the stage rudely, as a taxicab drew close to the curb where they stood.

"I see no need to make any promises one way or the other," answered Janet calmly.

"Very well, we won't need any," blurted the actress, stepping close to the side of the girl and grasping her wrist. Then to the figure coming up behind she said: "Bring her along, Chester. She's quite ugly about it."

Janet had time only to emit one shrill cry—the cry which Phil had heard while conferring with the aged actor, Caryll Torrey—before a strong hand was closed down over her mouth and a strong arm encircled her waist.

Before she could even begin to struggle she was swept into the taxicab behind Miss Wesson and crushed down onto the seat. The man who had so unexpectedly subdued her followed and found a place beside her. Then the chauffeur turned on his power, and with a honk of his horn started at a rapid rate of speed, uptown.

In the light that penetrated the cab from the brilliant street lamps, Janet quickly recognized her captor. He was Chester Hawkins. Like a dream it recurred to her what Phil Pry, in whose judgment she always had the most implicit faith, had said of this actor only a short time before: "Beware of that handsome brute."

And brute he was, she knew now from the savage way in which he had closed his hand over her mouth and crushed her waist in the fold of his strong arm.

Once, twice she tried to wriggle from his grip and give utterance to an alarm, but his hand and arm were effective in checking any outbreak.

The taxicab circled back and forth through cross streets as if to confuse the girl as to the course they were taking. But she was sharp enough to see that they were riding close to Central Park and she recognized the massive outlines of the New Theater. Then as they shot across Broadyaw, a fleeting glimpse at a street sign showed her she was on West Sixty-first street.

They drew up at the entrance of a handsome brownstone apartment house. She thought to make a more determined resistance here, but though she started to struggle fiercely, a handkerchief, heavy with some sickening odor, forced against her nostrils by the actor, speedily reduced her to an inert conscious condition.

Hawkins lifted her bodily from the cab and bore her into the elevator. Miss Wesson followed, explaining that the young woman was ill. An ascent was made to the third floor. The actress opened the door of an apartment, and Hawkins trailed her in with his burden.

Janet was placed in an easy chair in a forward parlor. She could see that the place was richly furnished. But her eyes were unsteady and her breath was difficult. She felt weak and ill, as from the effects of some powerful drug. She wanted to cry out, but she did not seem to have the strength.

"Now, young woman," warned Hawkins as he stood before her and shook his finger deliberately, "you may think it clever to chase a couple of respectable people, but you'll have a different opinion, I'm sure, when we get ready to let you out of here."

Janet felt some of her old defiant spirit creep back through her veins at this covert threat.

"You appear to have forgotten, Mr. Hawkins," she responded weakly, "that there is such a thing as punishment by the law for a kidnaping like this."

The actor laughed scornfully.

"You ought to be glad to be able to visit my apartments," he insinuated. "Many's the young woman, prettier than you, that's hankered for such a chance."

"How dare you speak to me so vulgarly," Janet demanded, a tinge of pink in her pallid cheeks showing resentment as loudly as words.

Hawkins laughed more scornfully than before.

"Miss—Miss—whatever your name is," he chortled.

"Janet Price," she answered shortly.

"Well, Janet Price," Hawkins went on, "you should know that women who stick their noses into other people's affairs are likely to get them pinched."

"I should like to know how long you propose to keep me here against my will?"

"Silly, we'll keep you until we get your promise to reveal your purpose in following us tonight."

Janet cleverly tried to laugh the actors' suspicion away.

"Chester," exclaimed Miss Wesson, grasping his arm, "she's the young woman who came on as an additional super tonight with that young newspaper reporter."

Hawkins scrutinized the girl's face closely.

"Blamed if she ain't," he blurted. "Trying to work up a new sensation for the newspapers, eh?"

"Mr. Hawkins," said Janet, stretching her hands forward on a table and looking the actor determinedly in the eyes, "I give you fair warning that if you do not release me at once, you will raise a storm about your ears that will drive you out of town, if it does not put you in jail—even if this murder of Miss Gorsden does not."

It was a chance shot the girl fired, but it struck home.

Both actress and actor looked in alarm at each other. Then Hawkins hissed: "So that's your scheme, is it? Well, I'll take mighty good care that you don't have a chance to get any further with it."

"What scheme?" demanded the girl.

"Blackmail, of course," shot back the actor malignly.

"That's a lie," Janet declared indignantly.

"Oh, is it?" he returned scornfully. "My friend, Miss Wesson, here will bear me out when we have you taken to court."

"Plotters! Wicked plotters!" exclaimed the girl shrilly. "I can well understand now why you both are suspected of complicity in that dreadful affair on the stage."

"That's a lie," flared the actress. "We are not suspected.."

"You keep still," ordered Hawkins, turning to his companion. "I'll manage this affair. Better, still, you get out of here. Go over to my Sixtieth street place and stay there till I come. I'll be over inside an hour."

Janet closely watched the departure of Annabelle. She saw her enter an adjoining room and issue forth in a few moments with a large silken bag in the folds of which she noted a peculiar undulating movement.

"I'm taking Sweetie along for company," the actress said to Hawkins, as she departed.

"Beware his bite," warned the actor.

When the door closed behind Miss Wesson, his conduct underwent a complete transformation.

Carelessly seating himself across the table from Janet, he said ingratiatingly: "I didn't mean all those harsh things I said to you just now. You see, she's —" darting his thumb in the direction of the door through which the actress had made her exit—"so infernally jealous that I have to be stern with every other woman I meet in order to keep Miss Wesson in agreeable humor. The truth is, I'm rather taken with you. You're a mighty clever young woman. I really would like to know you much better."

"The desire is all on your side, Mr. Hawkins," returned Janet decidedly. „When are you going to let me out of here?"

"Oh, come now, let's be friendly. I'm anxious to talk with you. There are some things I'd like to tell you about this Gorsden affair which will not only put me straight, but will also give you a good story for your paper. By the way, what is it?"

Janet, alive to the poss'bility if important disclosures, assumed a less forbidding tone.

"The Star," she answered kindly.

"Ah, a good paper. And while we're talking, we might as well be comfortable. Will you have a little wine?'

The girl, quick to realize the danger of drugged liquor, answered: "Thank you, but I never drink."

"Oh, this won't hurt you. Just a weak wine." He rose to leave the room. "You'll promise not to try to get away till I return. I'm going for a little lunch."

Janet nodded and Hawkins left the apartment. In his absence she carefully scrutinized her surroundings. The room was in disorder. Playbooks were strewn over the table. The walls were hung with a varied collection of pictures, mostly of Hawkins in the numerous characters he had appeared in on the stage. Swards, daggers and other properties also hung in profusion. One handsome scabbard, in particular, attracted her attention from the gleaming red stones with which it was decorated.

She got up quickly and hastened toward it for a closer inspection. It proved to be a receptacle for twin weapons of the stiletto type but it held only one. Something familiar in the appearance of the protruding handle led her to draw it carefully forth.

She started when she laid is across the palm of one hand for a close look. The blade was long and of an exceeding thinness. Where had she seen a similar one? Ah, yes, she remembered. Phil Pry, on the stage of the Thespis, had shown it to her as the stiletto with which Minna Gorsden had been slain.

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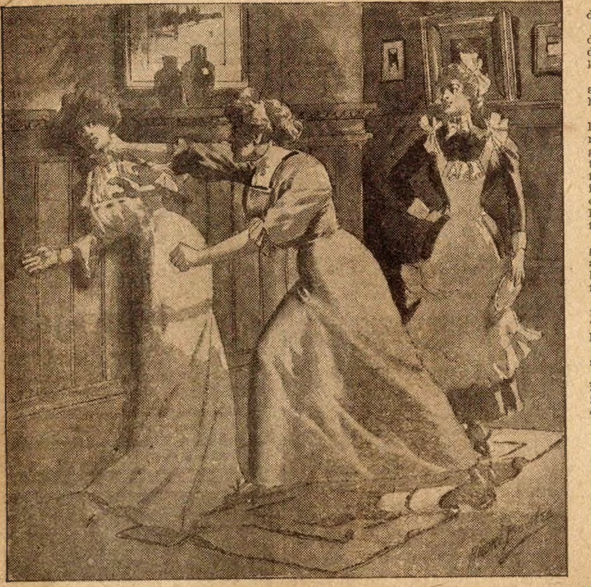

Madly I forced her against the wall.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK.

"MISS ALICE! Oh Miss Alice?"

I awoke with a start, and found the light of another day streaming into my room.

The call must have come from the corrider, so getting out of bed as nimbly as I could, owing to my hurt, I reached the portal to come face to face with Flavia.

"What is it, girl?" I queried.

"The dead has come to life!" cried the tall maid, whose face was seamed with excitement.

I caught her by the arm and pulled her forward.

"Now, tell me," I commanded, pushing her into a chair. "The really dead do not come to life——"

"But he was dead, you know."

"Who was dead?"

"The man who was killed in the library," and Flavia turned to me a countenance I shall never shut from my sight.

"Where is he, then?"

"In the little house down in the grove. I took an early walk to steady my nerves, you know. He is there now."

"And Doctor Dunlape and Teresa?"

"They must be asleep yet. What, are you really going down there to see the dark-faced man?"

"Why not?" I said with determination. "Thanks to the liniment I applied last night, my ankle is much better. I can walk quite well. You will not go along?"

"Me?" almost shrieked the superstitious girl. "Not for the world, Miss Alice!"

I bade her go back to her room, or where she pleased, whilst I made ready to investigate the startling story that had broken my slumber.

I took but little stock in what Flavia had told me, yet I considered the matter worth looking after. I took an ebony-mounted revolver from my dresser, a gift from my father the last year of his life, and left the house.

The sun was not yet very high, and there was a heavy moisture on the leaves that flecked the rambling path. I must own that a sense of trepidation took possession of me as I proceeded, and I was at a loss how to approach the pergola whose top I could see from the porch. My hand I kept at the hilt of the weapon as I scuttled along, my ankle seeming to gain strength as I advanced, and presently I was within a few feet of my goal.

There were no signs of life within, so far as I could see, but this neither confirmed nor denied Flavia's strange tale.

At last I stood before the vine-hidden door, and gently put out my hand and parted the creepers.

In another moment I uttered a cry, and stood like one suddenly transformed into stone.

There on the circling bench, leaning against the lattice work of the pergola, I saw Chamar Doaz with the ghastliest face I had ever beheld.

He was totally unaware of my presence, and he seemed asleep, for his eyes were closed, and for a second I thought him actually dead.

I beat down my fears and stepped inside. Not even then did he notice me.

I sat beside him, and in silence studied his white face.

All at once the head moved and then the deep, dark eyes of the Ceylonese opened.

"You?" said he, drawing back, and a smile lightened the gloom of his face.

"It is I," said I, laying my hand on his arm. "You have come back to life?"

The smile broadened at his lips.

"I have come back, but how came I here?"

"They brought you to this place," was the reply.

"They?" he echoed. "Ah, I remember. It was the doctor I encountered in the library. But he also robbed me."

"Robbed you of what?"

"Of the agent—the nobi. It is not here," he laid his hand on his bosom. "I had it when I went into the library, not to kill, but to see 'the master,' as you call him. Doctor Dunlape came in and caught me in the room of books. He came at me with hot words, which I parried, and calling me a traitor, he said I must die. He is stronger than I, although my people are not weaklings. He seized me unawares, and struck once with his dagger."

"But did not kill!" cried I.

"No. It was because of the little coat of mail I wear. The blow rendered me unconscious, for he struck like a giant. When I came back to life, I found myself in this place. How did you know I was here?"

I told him everything in the fewest words possible.

Chamar Doaz listened like a man in a dream.

"They will come for me when it grows dark again," he answered. "Why they did not carry me to the river, I do not know. But they will come for me."

"Tell me," said I, "tell me something about this Doctor Dunlape. You came hither at his call?"

"Yes, miss, he sent for me. It was long ago that I first met him. It was in my native country. He tried there to get possession of the nobi, but we shield that deadly agent so well that he was foiled. The sailor who must have sold it to your father is the only man who ever carried any of it away. Doctor Dunlape must have discovered that your father had it——"

"He did," I interrupted, my thoughts going back to my visit to the laboratory and finding the nobi missing. "He must have stolen it from its shelf. But he failed to find the antidote."

"It is well that he failed to find the foe of the nobi," said Chamar Doaz. "Now for the vengeance of the Ceylonese!"

He rose with some difficulty and straightened in my presence.

"You will go back, miss," he said, looking into my eyes. "He will come for me perhaps tonight. And she may come, too."

"Do you know Teresa?"

The man slowly shook his head.

"'Birds of a feather,' as you Americans say," he replied with a smirk. "I am the tiger now."

I could well believe this from the countenance before me, but I did not want it that way. I wanted to turn the pair over to the grip of the law.

The man from Ceylon insisted so strongly upon my departure that at last I turned away.

More than once I looked back at the pergola, but at last I re-entered the House of Fear and went directly to my room.

Teresa greeted me with a smile when we met, and Doctor Dunlape was more than usually clever.

I sent Flavia to the station postoffice, and she came back with another letter from Reginald.

"I have made a discovery," he wrote. "I believe Annabelle is either in the city or is to be here. At the risk of my life

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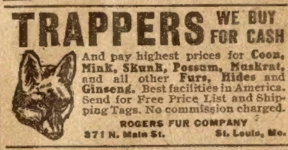

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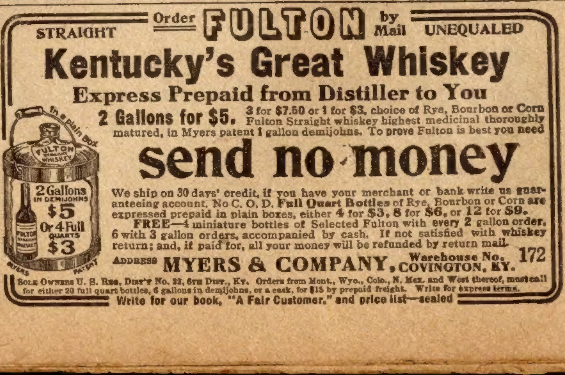

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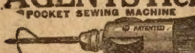

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I played spy on Madame Mantelli and discovered that she is either expecting some one, or that person is now in her house. I shall know more tonight. Can it be that they have kidnaped Annabelle?"

The day seemed endless. Doctor Dunlape and Teresa remained much indoors, watched by myself as much as possible without rousing their suspicion, and when the shades of night came on again, darkening the landscape, I thought of the lone man in the pergola.

Go to him I dared not. I knew that, tiger-like, he was waiting for his prey, and when the night was really on I felt my heart beating against the bars of its human cage.

All at once I heard the bell in the master's room. It was Flavia's duty to answer it, but there was something almost human in the summons, and I flew down the stair and burst into the library.

Rostan Gosnold stood in the middle of the room, holding an open book in his hands.

"It has come back!" he cried, the moment his glance fell upon me. "The unsigned will is here."

I hastened forward, and leaned over the document which he was displaying for my inspection.

"Now," continued the master of Shadow Farm, "we will have it witnessed. Send for Flavia."

I sent the clear notes of the bell throughout the house and in another moment I heard footsteps on the stair.

"Flavia——"

The name died on my lips as I started back, for instead of the tall maid, Teresa Hope stood before us.

"What is it?" she said, as she came forward. "I heard the sharp ring, and I thought——"

"It was not for you!" broke in the voice of Rostan Gosnold. "But you will do just as well. I want this will witnessed and your name will help serve my purpose if you can lay your hand on your heart and say that you know nothing of its disappearance."

I saw the face of the beautiful woman grow as white as bleached ashes at these words.

"You may sign," continued the master, "if you can also say on your oath that you know nothing of the whereabouts of Annabelle, and that you have not been a serpent in this house."

The eyes of Teresa Hope turned from the old man and became fastened on me.

"It is your work, witch!" she cried. "You have poisoned the mind of this man against me!" and before I could lift a hand she came at me with the fury of a tigress, her face tensely drawn and above her head a naked, gleaming stiletto.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

Now and then there are moments in one's life when one can almost look across the borders of the other world, when the veil that shrouds the unseen is partly lifted, and the mists that hide the Great Mystery drift away.

It was thus to me when I beheld Teresa Hope, armed with the dagger that glittred like a slender blade of doom, springing toward me in the library of Shadow Farm.

My heart seemed to stand still at sight of her, and I fell back against the table without anything between me and her passion.

Rostan Gosnold appeared to be as helpless as myself, but all at once I saw him move, and the next moment his hand encircled the woman's wrist and he held her off with a grip of steel.

"No murder here!" I heard him say, as Teresa struggled in his grasp. "Back to your nest, tigress! I am yet master in this house."

He forced her across the room, facing her with iron will, and I saw the white-faced creature pushed into the hallway and out of my sight. Even then I expected to see her leap again into the library, but instead I heard her footfalls on the stair, and knew that for the moment she had given over her intention.

The master went back to his chair, and I saw what his act had cost him. He was faint and pallid. I ran for his favorite potion and poured out a generous draught, which he drank without looking at me. Then he leaned back and closed his eyes.

"A veritable tigress," I heard him say, scarcely above his breath. "I will have no such creatures in the house."

The will was not signed that day, for at his motion I put it away in the book which I restored to the shelf, and later on left him alone.

Then again my thoughts drifted to the dark-skinned man waiting in the pergola. Where was Doctor Dunlape?

In the solitude of my room I tried to unravel the great plot against Rostan Gosnold, and by degrees it came to me. The fact that the missing will had come back told me that the plotters had a card which they considered sufficient. It was a grand play, not only for Shadow Farm, but for all that the master possessed.

The abduction of Annabelle was only a side drama, but one closely connected with the whole.

I was in the midst of my cogitations when a footstep approached my door, and before I could rise it opened and Doctor Dunlape and Teresa Hope came in.

I read danger in the gleaming eyes of each.

"Do not stir," commanded the doctor, as he strode forward with the woman at his heels. "No, noise, miss——"

My hand moved towards the weapon in the folds of my garment, but the next moment I was pounced upon by both and thrown across my couch.

A hand was at my throat, and I was gazing helplessly into the malignant eyes of the evil doctor.

Tighter and tighter grew the merciless grip, and presently the room and its contents faded before my vision and darkness came.

When I again opened my eyes, I knew that I was no longer a tenant of my room. A faint shaft of light fell across the ground at my feet, and I gradually made out a wall of stone.

I was sitting against the jagged stones with cords at my wrists, but my limbs were free, and I managed to move around that wall, discovering without difficulty that I was in the large cellar attached to the House of Fear.

What had happened since my incarceration in that novel prison I did not know. Had the plot succeeded? Had Doctor Dunlape and his co-plotter finished their work, and had I been left to perish where they had put me?

I found the door of the cellar, but it had been secured against my egress. I expected this, and going back to my corner, I leaned against the wall and shuddered.

A thousand thoughts rushed through my brain. If only Flavia knew—but how could the tall maid know?

I saw the ray of light grow fainter and fainter. I knew that day had given place to night. I felt that under cover of darkness the final blow would be struck, and that, after all, my efforts to baffle the two conspirators would fail.

At last I found a rock much sharper than its companions, and by rubbing my bonds against it, I freed myself, but what would even this success avail me? I was still in the dungeon, and my voice, if lifted, would not be heard.

Surely, I thought, at last, Flavia would miss me and attempt to solve the mystery of my disappearance. In vain did I tug at the heavy door. I was no Brooks with his great strength, and this I soon discovered.

Merciful was the swoon that followed my mad efforts to force that unyielding portal.

The last arrow of light was gone when I came out of the mental darkness. I was lying at the foot of the door, for I had fallen there in a dead faint of exhaustion.

Suddenly a sound which started every nerve into life fell upon my sensitive ears. I placed my face against the door and listened. I knew that some one was beyond the thick planks.

A key seemed to grind in the lock. I held my breath and waited. If a friend was out there, I would know, and if an enemy was tugging at the portal, I would know that, too.

The door swung inward at last, and I moved away.

"Miss Alice?"

I sprang forward and almost fell into Flavia's arms.

"You are here?" the girl went on, as she drew me close, so close that I felt her shiver.

"It is all over," she went on. "There is no master of Shadow Farm now."

I could not wholly suppress the cry that welled from my throat.

Gone? The master of the House of Fear?

"Whither has he gone?" I exclaimed, clutching Flavia's wrist till she moaned with pain. "What has happened since I came down into this pit of darkness?"

She did not reply, and together we ascended the steps to the house proper, and I knew that Flavia was leading me toward the library.

"Look!" cried the tall maid, as she gestured towards the interior of the room which was flooded with light. "He is not here."

I did not need her words to tell me this. The room was empty.

"Where is he?" and my hand went again toward her wrist. "Tell me, girl?"

She crossed the room and slowly opened the door of the master's bed chamber.

The light from the library fell into that little apartment, and I craned my neck forward with my eyes astare.

"He is there," Flavia said, in a hollow whisper.

I slipped past her and looked.

Across the bed lay the form of a man. I saw the ghastly face of the one I had served with my own life in deadly peril. Flavia stood aloof, pitying me, as I could see, from the depths of her soul.

In another moment I stood before the motionless form, looking down upon it. The room seemed to swim around me. I felt that I was in the presence of the last act in the House of Fear.

"What has become of them?" I exclaimed, wheeling swiftly upon the silent Flavia. "What has become of the pair?"

Flavia shook her head.

"You do not know?" cried I. "You stand there and tell me that you know not what has become of them?"

At that moment a sound came down the stair. I turned from the semi-darkened chamber and bounded through the library. Vengeance tugged fiercely

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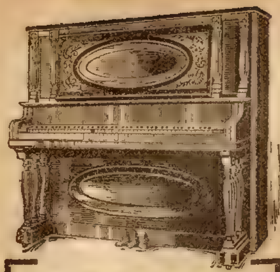

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at my heartstrings. If a legion of friends were on the stair I would not have turned back.

As I gained the door leading into the hall I almost collided with the tigress of Shadow Farm. She was there in all her weird beauty, with her lustrous eyes aglow with passion and her robes falling delicately about her feet.

"You?"

The word seemed to fall upon my senses like a drop of vitriol.

I made no reply—Flavia said afterward that I laughed—but with one great bound I was upon Teresa Hope before she could lift a hand.

Madly I forced her across the hall and against the wall beyond.

She did not speak. Her face was distorted with hatred, her eyes seemed to emit sparks of fire.

The necklace of pearls that encircled her throat parted and fell to the floor. As it rooled beneath my feet, I set my heel hard upon it and ground the gems to powder.

I saw nothing but the face of Teresa Hope, and thouhgt of nothing but the old man lying in the little room beyond the library.

She struggled, but what of that? I felt that I could have held two of her kind where she was, breathless and gasping.

"You have finished your work, but there is the hand of vengeance ready to pay you back!" I cried. "Where is yoru partner in this terrible crime"'

"Beware! you will kill, Miss Alice," sounded the voice of Flavia in my ears, as her hands laid hold on my own wrists. "Don't! This woman is the man's tool, nothing more."

I suddenly loosened my grip, and Teresa Hope slipped away. I saw her spring toward the staircase. I caught sight of her figure on the steps for a moment, and then she was gone.

I whirled upon Flavia with the ire of one robbed of victory.

"Why didn't you let me kill?" I cried, and then I fell against the polished newel, unable to breathe another word.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANNABELLE'S RETURN.

The front door had opened, letting in a gust of cold air. I no longer saw Flavia, nor did I think of the old man lying across his bed in the silent little chamber beyond the library.

Before me stood Reginald, half supporting a young girl whom I at once knew was Annabelle. For a moment I could not believe my eyes; I leaned heavily against the newel and stared at the pair. It seemed to me that Annabelle had come back from the dead. Flavia's cry brought me round, and darting forward, I took the girl from Reginald's arms and pressed her to my bosom.

He had been successful; he had found the heiress of Shadow Farm.

I did not wait for his story, but supporting Annabelle, I rushed up the stair, nor paused till I had her ensconced safely in my room. She looked at me silently and nodded thanks in return for my act.

"You must remain here, my dear," said I. "Don't leave the room on any account, and don't let any one in, who does not rap four times. Take my key and lock the door."

Her stare at these words of mine was a question, and it was the last thing I saw before I turned away.

"I found her at last," said Reginald, as I came upon him in the corridor below. "Madame Mantelli is a desperate woman. The man who carried Annabelle off I did not see. But the French woman was quite enough for me."

He smiled as he stopped, and then resumed.

"It isn't a long story. When I first went to Madame Mantelli's house in De Rousseau street, I got in bad. It is a real trap—just the sort of place a woman of her sort would inhabit. She seemed to suspect my mission from the first. The moment I entered her house and looked into her eyes, I knew I was in the presence of a woman of wickedness. She has the movement of a serpent and the eyes of a lynx. I would have guessed from the moment of meeting her that she was some kin to Teresa."

"What?" cried I, with a sudden start, "kin to Teresa Hope?"

"It must be. She has Teresa's eyes and her movements. I found out afterward that my guess was correct. She is Teresa's half-sister."

I gazed at Reginald like one in a maze of incredulity.

'When I returned to Madame Mantelli's house the second time it was night, and I had resolved to see what it really contained. I efffected an entrance from the rear, and found myself in the living-room. For a spell I thought the place had been deserted, but all at once I heard a voice which sent a thrill through every fiber of my being. It was the voice of Annabelle.

This powerful story will be concluded in the next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during the coming months. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid ten times over.

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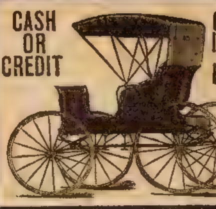

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Sooted.

"Mercy, Jane, what a dark coat of tan you have acquired."

"Tan! That isn't tan. I've been summering in Pittsburgh."

Tight Skirt.

"What do you think of that skirt, Jobson?"

"Reminds me of the last car home at night. Standing room only."

THEY CHANGED HIS MUG.

You Girls!

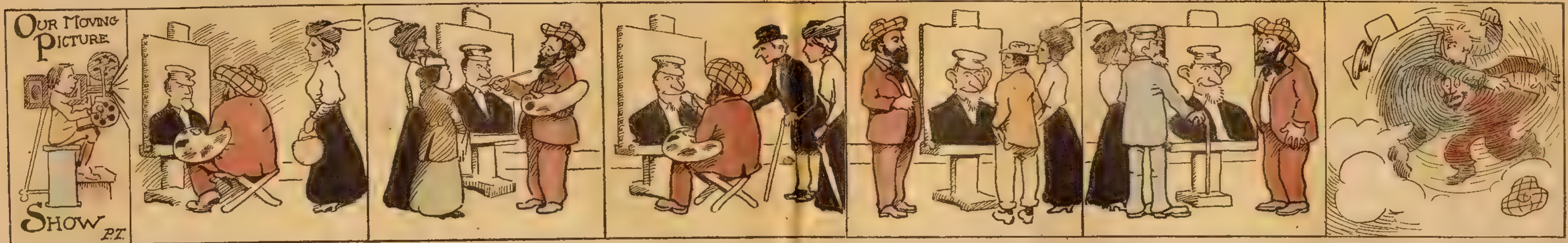
Daisy—I shall write Alice this afternoon. Have you any message?

Dolly—What! Writing to that horrid cat! Oh, give her my love.

Hard to Decide.

"Found a flat to suit you?"

"Not yet. We are undecided between three rooms with five windows and five rooms with three windows."



Captain Plugg's Wife—Yes, that is pretty good of the captain. I expect him home from a long voyage next week. May I bring in some of his relatives to help in getting the likeness?

The Captain's Sister—Yes, that's about it. I new the nose should have been longer. His nose is a striking feature.

The Captain's Brother—His mouth is very large. Make it considerably wider. Yep, that's right. One of them generous mouths.

The Captain's Nephew—Sure! His ears stand out just like that. It didn't look right with the ears flat.

The Captain—What! Do you call that a likeness of me, you infernal dauber?

"Change my features, would ye? Well, here goes to change yours.

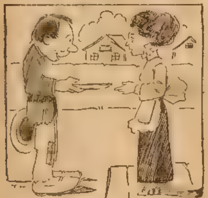
Both Engaged.

"Who is the small, rather homely girl over there?"

"That's the star graduate of our class. She is now engaged in a postgraduate course of study."

"And who is the rather silly-looking blonde near by?"

"Oh, she's the member of the class who couldn't get through college at all. She's engaged to be married."



Tramp—Now dat I've eaten dat pie, I'll play the piano and sing one of Caruso's songs fer pay for it.

Woman—What! Can you play and sing?

Tramp—Not a dern bit. No more dan you can cook.

Inconsistent.

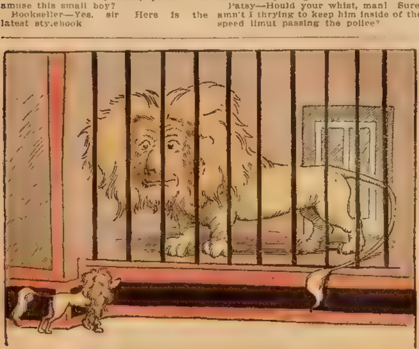
"Growcher says he favors international peace."

"Yes. But he is one of these people who can't talk about it without getting into a fight."

Comic Artist's Work.

Customer—Got any funny pictures to amuse this small boy?

Bookseller—Yes, sir. Here is the latest stylebook.



The King of Beasts—Isn't that a cute little lion!
The Dog—Isn't that a fine big poodle!

A Lost Wager.

A passenger who recently came over on one of the smaller boats, relates this incident. There was a chap on board who was much given to boasting about his skill with the rifle. The captain thought he'd take the boaster down a peg, so he said: "I don't think you could hit this bottle placed on the rail at twenty yards distance. The other replied that it would be mere child's play, whereupon the captain said: "I'll bet you $10 you don't hit it three times out of six." The boaster promptly took him up and the test made made. At the first shot he hit the bottle and it disappeared in fragments in the sea. "Trot out another one," cried the shooter triumphantly, getting his rifle ready. "Not at all," replied the captain. "The conditions were that you should hit that one three times out of six. You have to hit it twice more."

Hard to Hit.

A couple of farmers, standing in front of a restaurant, were discussing the good roads movement and the traffic on the country roads.

"The thing that makes me angry," said one, "is them motorcycles which tear past the house like a bullet and are out of sight before you can git a good look at 'em. I think I'll take a shot at 'em."

"If you do shoot at 'em," said the other, "let me know what luck you have. I can't do nothin' of the sort till I get a gun that scatters."

Diplomatic Husband.

Mrs. Max—Can't afford to let me go to the seashore? Why not? My board there wouldn't cost much more than it does here.

Mr. Max—I admit that, my love; but think of all the money I'd have to spend entertaining myself in your absence.

A Hard Job, Too.

Critic—Nourish him wid the whip, Patsy, the way ye'r let us see what sort of a baste ye've got.

Patsy—Hould your whist, man! Sure, amn't I thrying to keep him inside of the speed limut passing the police?

And Moonshine.

"You want to marry my daughter?" asked the father.

"I do," replied the young man.

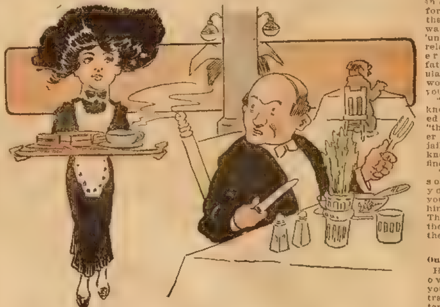
"Have you got anything saved up for a rainy day?"

"There won't be any rainy days if I marry your daughter, sir. It will be all sunshine."

Airship's Predecessor.

"Stephenson broke another record today. His 'Rocket' made a flight of five miles carrying four passengers, and left the rails only twice."

"Very remarkable achievement, very—but you can't tell me that the steam engine will ever be of any real practical value."



Guest—I notice the taste of rubber in this soup.
Waitress—We put in rubber, sir, to make it noiseless.

Might Overdo It.

"Jimmy," said Tommy, "what's the matter with you? You don't never go in for any fun nowadays."

"No; I'm bein' good because I'm goin' to have a birthday soon, an' I want to git a present," replied Jimmy.

"Better not be too good, or mebbe they wont give yer nothin' but a Bible."

Work and Worry.

"Worry wears out more people than work does," said the ready-made philosopher.

"Of course it does," replied Mr. Growcher, "for the simple reason that so many of us would rather put in our time worrying about work than doing it."

Young America.

"What's the matter, little boy?"

"M-maw's gone an' drowned all the kittens."

"Dear, dear! Now, that's too bad."

"Yep, she p-promised—boo-hoo—'at I c'u'd do it."

Met Him Half Way.

Beggar—Please, mister, a dime for a poor blind man.

Old Gentleman—But you are only blind in one eye.

Beggar—All right, make it a nickel then.

An Easy Mark.

"Your dog threatened to bite me yesterday."

"And didn't he?"

"No, not quite."

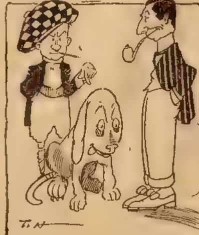
"That's the third time I have been swindled in a dog."

A Warning.

"Why, 'Mandy," said old Mammy Dinah, "what's diss I hyah about you' marryin' dat good-for-nuthin' Sam Johnsing?"

"Ya-as, mammy, I suttinly am," said 'Mandy, blushing a rich ochre.

"Why, dat man's de nateralest born flirt dere ever was on diss yeare earth, chile," said mammy. "Why, dey done fla'hed him f'm de barber shop caze ebbery time he look in the glass he'd wink at hisse'f."



Davis—How can you call a young elephant of a canine like that a lap dog?
Smith—Come around some time and hear him eat.

He Was Present.

A barrister of considerable reputation on a northern circuit found it necessary, if he were to gain a verdict, to discredit a certain witness.

The cross-examination, therefore, suggested that the youth was a wrong 'un, and that his relations in general, and his father in particular, were all worthless. The youth demurred.

"Don't you know," thundered the counsel, "that your father would be in jail if the police knew where to find him?"

"I don't think so," said the youth. "But you'd better ask him yourself. There he sits in the back row of the jury."

Out of Pocket.

He was a rather overdressed youth and attracted much attention when he entered the car. He occupied the only vacant seat beside a rather elderly gentleman. When the conductor came for his fare he fumbled for his money, and then suddenly became very pale.

"Oh, I've been robbed!" he gasped. "There is nothing but a bit of an old cigar in my pocket."

"My boy," said the deep bass voice of the man by his side, "would you mind taking your hand out of my pocket?"

His Move.

"Why are you changing your boarding house?"

"The widow who rooms across the hall is too darned religious."

"Sings gospel hymns all night, does she?"

"No; nothing like that. The trouble is that she has asked me twice if I knew that the Bible commands us to love our neighbors."

Miss Philadelphia.

He (from New York)—Did you go to the world's fair?

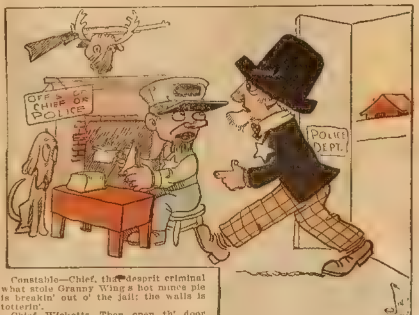
She (from Philadelphia)—No; I saw as much as one mind can retain at our centennial exposition in 1876.

He (after a pause)—By the way, was the centennial exposition more exciting than the food?

A Social Diplomat.

"How is it that young Clymer has made such a hit with Mrs. Agretti the society leader?"

"He told her he could not understand why, when she was reported to be so up-to-date in all the fashions, that she was hopelessly behind the present style of large feet."


OFFICE OF CHIEF OF POLICE
POLICE DEPT.

Constable—Chief, that desprit criminal what stole Granny Wing's hot mince pie is breakin' out o' the jail; the walls is totterin'.

Chief Wicketts—Then open th' door quick an' let him out; do you think we want our nice jail all broke up after we just paintin' it?

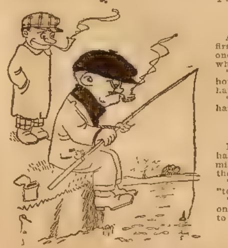
Self-Appraised.

"Wise men hesitate—only fools are certain," he observed in the course of a conversation with his tender spouse.

"I don't know about that," she said testily.

"Well, I am certain of it!" he exclaimed.

And for a long time he was puzzled to understand why she burst out laughing at him.



Rodd—Don't you ever have a longing to go fishing?

Nodd—Yes; I've had a longin' to go fishin' a few times, but I've never had a longin' to dig bait, yet.

A Poor Cure.

Mayor Speer of Denver, at a recent temperance banquet, was discussing a drink cure of little efficacy.

"When I think of this cure," he said, "I recall a poor old woman with a red nose who entered a magistrate's office and said.

"'I'd like to take the pledge; if you please.'

"'Very good,' said the polite clerk. "And how long did you wish to take it for?'

"'In the past,' said the old woman, 'I've always took it for life.'"

A Rare Season.

A St. Louis traveling man, making his first trip through North Dakota, woke up one May morning to find the ground white with snow.

"For Heaven's sake," he asked the hotel clerk disgustedly, "when do you have summer out in this country?"

"I don't know," replied the clerk. "I have only been here eleven months."

Unnecessary.

It was at a reception and the lady who had been reading up on health culture mistook Lawyer Williams for his brother, the doctor.

"Is it better," she asked confidentially, "to lie on the right side or the left?"

"Madam," replied the lawyer, "if one is on the right side it often isn't necessary to lie at all."

Bigger and Bigger.

"I asked her to remove her big hat so I could see the stage."

"Wouldn't she do it?"

"No; she said if she held her hat in her lap she couldn't see the stage herself."

MERE GUESSES.

A suffragette
May fight and fight,
And still look under
The bed at night.

But if she found
A burglar there,
She'd yank him out
And pull his hair.

And while she had
The robber's goat
She'd make the lad
Pledge his vote.

Or maybe she,
With courage grim,
Would pause to make
A speech to him.

Arousing Suspicion.

"How did the accident happen?" asked the reporter on the scene of the railway horror.

"Somebody stopped the train by pulling the air-cord," answered the conductor, "so the second section ran into us. It will take six hours to clear the track so that we can go ahead."

"Six hours!" shrieked a passenger. "And I was to be married today!"

"Have you any idea who pulled the rope?" continued the reporter, disregarding the interruption.

"I didn't have until now," whispered the conductor. "But what do you think of that fellow that just butted in? I'll sic the detective on him.

Somewhat Unfortunate.

"There are some times in my life when I have felt that fate is indeed ironical," said the man who was seldom troubled by his debts.

"Do you refer to any special occasions?" inquired one of his oldest creditors.

"One of them came last week, when I was in Chicago," said the cheerful debtor. "I had a money order for $25, and the only person who could identify me was a man to whom I owed thirty."

Cause for Surprise.

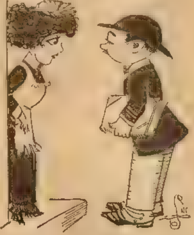
A fool and his money are parted quite
soon,
Is as true as a shoe's made of leather;
But the thing that surprises us most is
the fact
How the two get so often together."

Natural Philosophy.

"Papa," said the hopeful youth, "can you tell me what is natural philosophy?"

"Of course I can," said papa, proud and relieved to find that there was at least something he could tell his offspring. "Natural philosophy is the science of cause and reason. Now, for instance, you see the steam coming out of the spout of the kettle, but you don't know why or for what reason it does so, and ——"

"Oh, but I do, papa!" chirped the hope of the household. "The reason the steam comes out of the kettle is so that mamma may open your letters without your knowing it."



Mr. Morningcall (the collector)—Is Mr. Nopay in?

The Servant in the House—No, sir. He went downstairs a minute ago. I think he went out, sir.

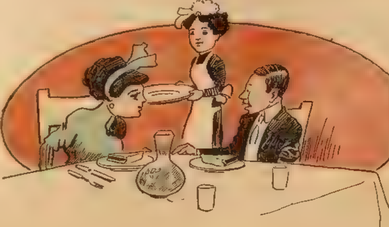
Mr. Morningcall—Thank you, I heard that he was down and out, but I wished to see for myself.

From the Farmer.

"Our whole neighborhood has been stirred up," said the regular reader.

The editor of the country weekly seized his pen. "Tell me all about it," he said. "What we want is news. What stirred it up?"

"Plowing," said the farmer.

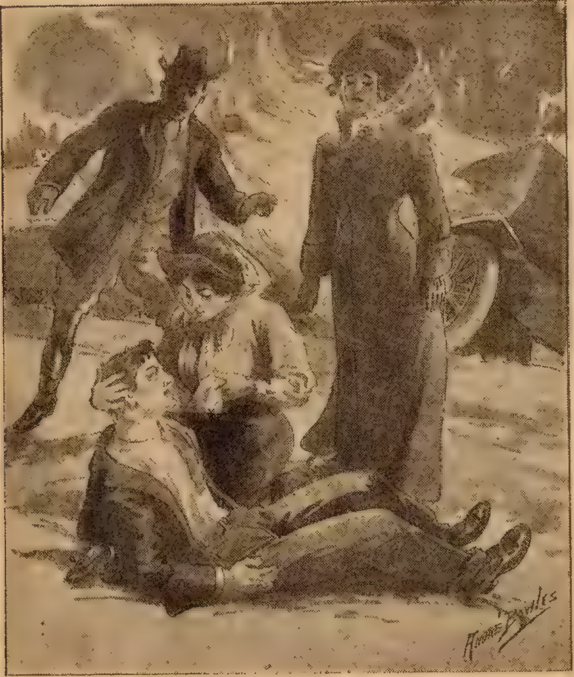


Younglee—This blueberry pie looks queer, dear.
Mrs. Younglee—Oh, honey, maybe I put too much bluing in the dough.

The First Wife's Son;

Or, A BROTHER'S BIRTHRIGHT

By Granville Osborne



"Eddie—my love, my love!"

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CHAPTER VII.

"DOES he know?"

Lady Gower asked herself the question over and over again when she looked down on her dead husband's face, calm and smiling, as of one who has peacefully fallen asleep with some happy thought to lull him; and during the days that followed, the question would force itself into her grief, into the sad realization of her widowhood, her regrets for the past.

"Does he know? Did Jim tell him?"

Surely not! Surely Sir James had either repented of his intended confession or had died ere the fateful words had passed his lips. For "Eddie Gower" Gower—as we still must call him—looked at her as fondly as of yore, and spoke to her with even more than his usual tenderness and respect.

He could know nothing, Cora decided. On the subject of his last conversation with his father, he did not say a word, and neither Lady Gower nor Leslie questioned him. The legal formalities following the funeral were gone through; Leslie took undisputed possession of the estate, and was accosted by the tenants as "Sir Leslie;" and Cora Gower felt that the danger of discovery and shame was over.

The thought brought relief no doubt, but it brought also the resumption of that burden of deceit which had bowed her shoulders for more than twenty years. She could not be altogether a bad woman, she said to herself with a bitter smile, or her conscience would not torture her so cruelly.

Sometimes she felt a wild longing, which frightened her, to fling herself on her knees before Eleanor's son and tell him the truth. Again she was stirred to an unreasoning anger against him, and treated him with a capricious petulance. Her temper seemed to become daily more impatient and overbearing.

She had never learned to bear sorrow patiently, and her husband's memory was constantly with her. Her grief for him united with the gnawing remorse and shame which she felt in Eddie's presence seemed to sting her almost to madness. She complained constantly, uttering unjust reproaches, charging both her sons with neglect of her, with indifference to her sorrow, with disregard for her wishes. She took offense if she were not consulted on the most trivial matters concerning the property, the servants, or her sons' own affairs

Leslie's engagement to Terry increased her bitterness. Always jealous, she was especially so in the case of this son, whom she loved with an affection that amounted almost to worship; and poor Terry had to submit to many sharp words and unkind looks.

"Mother," Leslie said impatiently, one day after he had seen the girl home from the Linn, "you are making Terry afraid to come here. What has she done to offend you? You used to like her."

"I have no dislike for the girl," Lady Gower replied haughtily. "Do not exaggerate, Leslie! Surely it is not for my son to teach me how I should behave to any one who comes to the Linn! It is true that I may not be mistress here for long, but I am mistress just now. Personally, I have no dislike for Terry Ormonde, but I do dislike the connection, and I may as well tell you so."

Leslie turned impatiently away. He disliked and despised Colonel Ormonde. It had been Sir James Gower's custom to confide in Eddie rather than in his brother, and Leslie had had only a slight knowledge of the Colonel's affairs, and was not aware until he had succeeded his father how heavy were Colonel Ormonde's obligations to the Gowers.

The discovery had come as a shock to him, and crush down the thought as he would he could not help wondering again and again if her father's difficulties had had any share in bringing Terry to promise him her hand.

It was not a pleasant thought, but Leslie admitted to himself, with a sigh, that his engagement to Terry had not realized his dream, that Terry herself was either strangely altered or had always been a quite different being from the girl she had seemed to be. At first he had tried to explain away her coldness as a girl's natural shyness at the change in their relative positions. Then he had attributed the alteration in her to the shock of Sir James' sudden death, to her timidity in looking forward to the rather important position which she would occupy after her marriage; finally, to his mother's jealousy and unkindness; but as time went on the conviction was forced on Leslie's mind that none of these explanations would suffice. Terry was no longer the happy, frank girl of former days. She seemed to try to respond to his affection; but the effort was apparent. She was dull, listless, plainly unhappy. Her face was growing thin and pale; her eyes lost their brightness. Lady Gower had once or twice remarked, with an ill-natured satisfaction, on the girl's changed looks; but even good-natured observers could not but see that Terry was "not herself."

Leslie thought gloomily of these things, as he walked down the avenue after having left his mother, and passed through the great entrance gate of the Linn. He had no definite object in view, his main desire having been to escape from Lady Gower's presence before he lost his temper. He walked rapidly for some distance, swinging his cane, a frown on his brow, his blue eyes darkened by his troubled thoughts. Unconsciously he had taken the road which led to Mrs. Dene's cottage. He had somehow, since his father's death, fallen into the habit of going pretty frequently for a walk with Rachel Dene. Rachel was in the garden gathering chrysanthemums to decorate her little drawingroom. A light came into her eyes as she recognized the tall figure striding along under the richly tinted October foliage of the trees. There was not another man in the country who walked as Leslie did—his handsome head thrown back proudly, his whole form full of manly vigor and grace.

Rachel went to the gate to meet him. As she shook hands with him she gave a slight start.

"What a strange thing, Leslie! You looked quite like Lady Gower just now."

The young man laughed; his ill-temper was generally short lived, and had evaporated in Rachel's bright presence.

"I don't know how I managed it, Mrs. Dene," he said, "seeing that we are mother and son only by marriage—a fact she has made people lose sight of," he added, with an affectionate feeling of remorse for his impatience with his mother a short time before.

"She is very fond of you, I think—but you really did look like her."

"Mrs. Dene, you are a flatterer. You tempt me to retaliate."

A little color came into Rachel's cheeks as she met the eyes gazing admiringly into her face. She did indeed look very fair. Her face was what has been called the intellectual Irish type—a pure, pale face, with delicate, regular features and finely arched eyebrows above the gray eyes, with their large pupils and thick black lashes. The breeze slightly ruffled the rich brown hair, which the sun touched with a golden glint, and no costume could have been more becoming to the slim, straight figure than the simple black gown and large white apron she wore.

"Let me help you," the young man said. They went side by side through the garden, selecting the choicest blossoms. At first their talk was of trifles, but it gradually drifted to serious things.

Rachel, after she had left her flowers indoors, came out again and sat down on the garden seat. It was a relief to Leslie to speak freely of his anxiety about Terry; and, with happy denseness, he perceived nothing but a friendly interest in Rachel Dene's bright eyes and flushed cheeks.

Leslie said nothing of that ugly suspicion which had entered his mind when he learned the truth about Colonel Ormonde's money affairs. He spoke merely of the change in Terry, of her pallor and sadness; and Rachel listened intently, but would not nor could not offer any explanation.

Then, somehow they began to speak of the death of Leslie's father, and Rachel found herself telling her companion about her own baby who had died.

Strange! She had never spoken of it to a man—scarcely to another woman. Leslie was silent, looking into her beautiful eyes that filled once or twice with tears; and when Rachel rose, they walked in silence to the gate. The afternoon was very still; they seemed to be shut into a world of sunshine and rich color. No one was in sight, and only the "coo-coo" of Rachel's pigeons broke the silence.

"Good-by, Leslie!" Rachel said, and held out her hand.

Suddenly the young man bent over the white hand and raised it to his lips. Then, raising his cap, he strode away.

Rachel went back into the garden, pausing to bend over a tall chrysanthemum, raising a broken blossom in her white fingers; and two tears fell from her eyes, glittering brightly in the sunlight. Was she still thinking of her baby? No.

Leslie had been deeply touched by her confidence, by her sweet kindness, and sympathy. That was all, he told himself, as he drew near home. Yet he sighed with a haunting sense of something that was wanting in his life.

He found Lady Gower on the terrace, pacing to and fro, her face stern and angry. She was in outdoor dress, and Leslie recollected with a sudden start, that he had promised to accompany his

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mother to Barnton, the county town. Their business was to see a motor car which Sir James had ordered to be built for him some time before his death, and which was now finished

"I'm so sorry, mother! I've kept you waiting a shameful time!" Leslie said, with his usual careless good nature. "It's too late to go this afternoon, isn't it? You see, I've been with Mrs. Dene—"

Lady Gower interrupted him violently. "You are constantly with Mrs. Dene. You make her your confident; you tell her things you won't tell me. People are talking about you."

Leslie shrugged his shoulders.

"Let them talk! How absurd!"

"Yes, it is absurd—absurd that a youth like you should make a friend and companion of Mrs. Dene, a widow ten or fifteen years your senior!"

"Oh, not quite so much as that, mother!" Leslie said, still with a contemptuous good humor. "Do be reasonable! A moment ago you said people were talking about us—now you say Mrs. Dene is too old to be my friend."

"You are mad!" Lady Gower replied violently. "It is bad enough that you should have let yourself be entangled into an engagement with a penniless girl; but you must needs make yourself remarkable with Rachel Dene. Can't you see that she is madly in love with you?"

A hot flash swept over Leslie's fair, handsome face.

"Mother, you are too bad! Mrs. Dene is a lady. It is insulting her cruelly to speak of her as you did just now. I think you are jealous of every woman that comes near me. Was it not enough for you to have tormented my father all his life by your unfair reproaches and jealousies?"

Leslie Gower was very angry, or he would not have used the words—words which, however true in themselves, were unbecoming and ungenerous when addressed to his mother; but Lady Gower's attack on Rachel had offended the young man more deeply than he knew. In spite of his easy good nature he had inherited some of Cora's own passionate pride, and had been used all his life to indulgence, both in speech and action from both his parents.

Hot, bitter words followed between him and Lady Gower, each growing momentarily more reckless of all save the desire to wound the other. The very love they bore each other served but to augment the anger they felt—he against his mother's jealousy and overbearing tyranny; she against the rebellion which she saw or fancied she saw, against the authority which she had for so long exercised over her sons and husband.

A fear that her power was slipping away from her awoke a cruel thought in her heart. She alone knew a certain secret which would humiliate her son's pride and make him absolutely dependent on her will!

* * * * *

How had it happened? How had a moment of passion wrecked the work of more than twenty years? She had schemed and sinned for this son of hers, and now——

Now he knew all; and Cora Gower, with a cry of anguish, turned, with terror at her heart, from the sight of the stricken look of shame and horror on the handsome face.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I must speak to Eddie about it; I must tell him—and Terry!"

Leslie said the words alone as he lay sleepless in bed that night. He had drawn up the blind in the hope that the sight of the dark, star-lit heavens would calm him, as it had always done in his boyhood; and he could see the half-stripped branches of the trees, fantastic shadows that tossed and dipped in the wind. In the silence he heard the river's voice, sounding mournful in the night.

When his mother had turned on him and panted out her confession, his first thought had been that her brain was unhinged; but now he found it impossible to think so. Lady Gower's own look of fear when she had realized that it was too late to recall her words had brought conviction of their truth. A thousand little circumstances rose in Leslie's mind to give color to the thing—his father's recurring fits of gloom., his almost remorseful kindness and tenderness to Eddie, his frequent unreasonable harshness, alternating with the indulgence, that was shown to himself.

Words spoken at various times by both his parents sprang up in his memory, lurid with this terrible new meaning. He remambered once, when he was scarcely more than a baby, going to lay his picture book on his father's knee, and the book had opened at a colored picture of Jacob coming with a dish in his hands to his father's bedside. He had asked childish questions, and had cried bitterly, in surprise and grief, when his father had roughly thrust him away.

What a terrible story it was! Surely one of the saddest and most awful in the annals of human perfidity; and he himself was a supplanter—he had robbed his brother of his birthright!

"I ought to tell Terry," he said to himself again, stupidly, with an aching head; "but there is mother."

His anger against his mother, the horror he felt of her crime, were beginning to give place to a feeling of pity. He was beginning to realize dimly how much that beautiful woman had suffered during all those years—and she had sinned and suffered for him.

"I will speak to Eddie about it tomorrow," he told himself again. He had been accustomed to turn to his brother for sympathy, and advice since their earliest childhood; and the determination to speak to Eddie brought a feeling of rest which made it possible to fall asleep.

How lovely the Linn looked, when, waking next morning, he flung open his window and leaned out! It had been raining, and the sun lit a thousand diamond drops on the grass and trees. Amid the many sad thoughts which were thronging his mind, there was room for a feeling of pain that he was not the master of the Linn, the Linn which he had been taught to consider his, which had been inseparable from all his dreams of the future.

He dressed hurriedly and went downstairs. He was crossing the hall when a servant brought him a note.

"Come to my sittingroom," it ran. "I have been up all night and heard you coming downstairs. Do not refuse me—I must speak with you

"YOUR MOTHER."

The young man's lips quivered as he read the signature—those two words which were, in their simple selves, far more eloquent than any passionate appeals and protestations. Rachel Dene's words spoken yesterday seemed to ring in his ears—"She is very, very fond of you, I think." He turned and mounted the stairs. He could not have said what prompted him to knock at the door of his mother's boudoir. In former days he had been accustomed to enter without much ceremony and the sound of his knock struck coldly on Cora's heart.

Her hair was bound, though the glistening coils were ruffled and disordered. She wore a loose gown of a deep red color which enhanced the ghastly pallor of her face. She came forward quickly, her eyes eagerly questioning her son's; but the young man—who could not meet her gaze—looked determinedly downward.

"Leslie! Oh, what does the name matter! I have grown used to calling you Leslie. Leslie, can't you forgive me? Say you forgive me! I did it for your sake! If you knew what I have suffered during all these years—the haunting fear of discovery, the burden of conscious guilt, the pain and shame of having people believe that you, my darling, were not my own son—that I was the mother of that hunchback——"

Leslie's face hardened; he held up his hand to stop her.

"Oh, I know he is good!" Cora cried bitterly. "Didn't Rachel Dene say so? Doesn't every one say he is better than you?"

It was absurd, but Leslie was conscious of a quick jealous pang at the thought that Rachel had said so.

"No wonder!" Cora cried, with a wild laugh. "I suppose he takes after his mother. She was a good woman, and I am wicked. I suppose that was why I hated her so much—why I was so jealous of her, even in her grave. I could not bear that her son should thrust you out; and it seemed so easy, so terribly easy. Oh, my boy, my boy. Don't be hard on me! You know I am a proud woman, and I am humbling myself to ask pardon of you."

She broke into a passionate fit of repining. Even now the long evil habits were asserting themselves—she was, even in her terrible grief, consciously playing on the young man's feelings,

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aware all the time of the beauty of her great dark eyes, of the golden glory of her hair, of the fairness of the jeweled hands in which she hid her face, of the sweetness of her appealing voice.

"Mother," Leslie said gently, "don't cry! Indeed I forgive you as I forgive father; but the wrong is hardly mine to forgive, you must remember. It is Eddie who is chiefly concerned. What we have to do is set ourselves right with him."

There was a silence.

"Eddie is very good," Lady Gower said in a faint voice and with her face still hidden. "No one could help loving him. He has been the best of sons to me; and he is very fond of you, Leslie."

She seemed now to be pursuing her own reflections rather than speaking to her son.

"If Eddie knew the truth!" she said musingly.

"He must know it!" Leslie said sternly. "I must tell him today. Mother," he cried, as a thought suddenly struck him, "what if he knows it already? It seems impossible—but what else could it have been that father had to say to him that day?"

Lady Gower shook her head, a faint, incredulous smile on her lips. She was looking up at her son now, and there was a strange intentness in her gaze.

"Eddie does not know," she said. "Whatever your father told him, it was not that. Perhaps he meant to tell it, and before he could speak the words——" She shuddered at the recollection of those dreadful minutes during which grief for the man she loved had struggled with her selfish terror. "No, no," she went on, "Eddie knows nothing. He is very good—but he is human. He could not have behaved as he has done to us had he known, and I do not believe that any man living would quietly give up his claim to a handsome estate for his brother's sake. Yet Eddie is reasonable. He must know that he is different from other men, that he would really be far happier as he is. Still, we cannot risk telling him."

"Risk! Mother, what do you mean?"

"What I say," Cora replied. Now she was standing, and her dark eyes met his blue ones, which were ablaze with anger.

"I mean what I say," she repeated. "After all, have I not a claim on you? I have secured the estate for you. Listen to me, Leslie! You cannot frighten me by your anger. I have suffered far too much for that. What I have endured now gives me a right to speak. Will you hold up your mother to public contempt and scorn—as you must do if you give your brother his birthright?"

A low moan came from Leslie's lips. Lady Gower saw her advantage and pursued it.

"I may be sorry for what I have done," she cried defiantly. "I am sorry! I would not do it now had I the chance again, but I am not sorry enough for that—that would kill me. Consider yourself, too! What can you do as a second son? You have been brought up as the heir. You are lazy and careless and extravagant, people say. You have no brains, like Eddie; and it is too late for you to begin to study for any profession. What is to become of you? What is to happen to Terry Ormonde, to whom you are betrothed?"

The young man turned from her. Her words were working like poison in his blood. He saw too plainly all the difficulties which she was ruthlessly setting before him. With some of her passionate nature he had inherited his father's love of ease and pleasure, his ready yielding to persuasion. It stung him, too, to think of Terry. It had pleased his vanity to picture himself rescuing her from poverty—and now what had he to offer her?

"I must see Eddie," he said, only evading the hand which Lady Gower tried to lay on his arm, he hurriedly left the room.

"I will go for a ride before I speak to Eddie," he said to himself. "It will clear my head and quiet my nerves a bit. I must not let him see how terribly cut up I am."

He had a cup of coffee sent up to his own room, and ordered his horse to be gotten ready. For hours he rode about the lovely country surrounding the Linn, the reins dropping loosely on his horse's neck, his mind busied with a painful conflict, all that was weakest and worst in him, fighting fiercely against his nobler self.

CHAPTER IX.

"Mother!"

Eddie Gower's voice came in at the window of his mother's sittingroom, where she had been since breakfast. The window was open, for the October day was mild and sunny after last night's rain. With her usual stern determination, Cora had appeared at the breakfast table half an hour after her stormy interview with Leslie. She was pale, but no one could have guessed the tumult within; and she had impatiently put aside Eddie's questions, saying that she was quite well, and that Leslie had gone for a ride.

"Mother," Eddie cried again, "I've been to Barnton and have gotten the motor car! It's a beauty—do come down and see it! I picked up Terry on the road. Let us go for a drive before luncheon."

Lady Gower went downstairs and joined the two young people, who were standing by the automobile in animated conversation with the chauffeur. Terry looked pleased and interested, Cora thought; there was more color in her cheeks than there had been for some time past.

"It seats just four," Eddie said, and Leslie and I promised Mrs. Dene that she should be one of the first to ride in it, but perhaps she'll forgive me for meeting Terry. What a pity Leslie is not here to see it!"

"Half-past twelve," Lady Gower said, glancing at a tiny jeweled watch. "Terry, come upstairs with me, and Jeanne will find you a wrap of some sort and a veil."

She left the girl with her maid, and going into her own room, glanced at the mirror. A bitter laugh of derision came from her lips. How ridiculous the whole position was! She was disgraced already in her own son's eyes—she was only awaiting his will to find herself dishonored before all the world. She was living in the house of the man she had robbed. Her husband had died with their sin, as she believed, unconfessed; and she was laughing and talking and going for a ride in the new motor car.

Truly, life was a cruel comedy, she said to herself. She was full of a bitter resentment against her sufferings, yet she would not willingly renounce the fruits of her wrong-doing.

* * * * *

A strange sound broke the stillness of the leafy lane through which Leslie Gower was slowly riding homeward. He started out of his reverie, and his horse raised his head and sniffed the air.

"Oh, just an automobile!" Leslie said to himself, with that touch of contempt with which a fine equestrian and lover of horses thinks of all mechanical substitutes.

He rode on slowly. The noise grew louder; and now Leslie was aware of something strange in it. It was not the regular hum of an automobile in motion. Surely that was a cry he heard? And then something shone through the trees with a glare that was brighter than the rich hues of the foliage.

Leslie jerked up the reins and rode madly out of the lane into the green road. Far away, along it, there was a whirling mass of dust and smoke and fire; and those terrible cries came distinctly now. At first he heard a man's voice and a woman's, but as he galloped along the road the woman's voice died away.

He was close to it now, and a terrible fear made him reel in his saddle, while the blue sky above and the white road beneath, seemed to recede miles. He set his teeth and forced himself forward, and with a great effort his brain grew clear, and he was able to make out that there were four figures by the roadside, all. now—thank Heaven!—at a little distance from the blazing car.

It was his mother's motor? That must be the chauffeur—that man who lay unconscious, with a terribly charred face and hands. Lady Gower was sitting on the grass by the roadside—not hurt, it seemed to Leslie, except by the shock. Her face was as white as marble; her lips were tightly set, and the other woman?

Thank Heaven, the other woman was not Rachel Dene!. That was the thought which leaped to life in Leslie's mind, cruel, selfish, unnatural as it seemed to him afterward. He was glad.

Rachel was not there—he could not help being glad. He had thought of her before he thought of any one else—even the brother who was so dear to him; and in that moment he realized that he loved Rachel Dene—that his boyish fancy for pretty Terry Ormonde had burned itself out.

These thoughts took hardly a second—they came to him like blinding flashes of light. The next instant he had rushed forward with a cry, recognizing the other woman. It was Terry Ormonde, and she was bending over Eddie, supporting his head on her knee. She did not hear Leslie's cry nor the sound of his footsteps, as he flung himself from the horse and rushed forward. Her eyes were fixed in an agonized suspense on the white face on her knee.

Was he dead? Would he never again look at her? She had thought herself so unhappy, so lonely, only this morning; but now it seemed to her that one look into his eyes, one smile from him, would be sufficient to fill her life with sunshine and gladness—that the sound of his voice saying her name would fill the universe with music. She hung over him, blind and deaf to everything else.

His eyelids fluttered; his heart heaved. Then he suddenly opened his eyes, and seeing Terry's face above him, smiled happily. A wild cry of mingled joy and pain broke from Terry's lips

"Eddie—my love my love!"

The look which he had given her had removed all doubt. He loved her! She had forgotten everything else—it seemed to her that they two were quite alone.

Then the blood surged up into her white cheeks as she realized all that her voice, even more than her words, must have told. Even during those tragic moments Terry was still a timid, modest maiden. She looked round her, gradually growing clearly conscious of the terrible scene. She was unhurt, and Eddie did not seem to be seriously injured; but Lady Gower and the driver?

Terry tried to rise, gently raising Eddie's head from her knee. A strong hand was held out to her. She looked up and met Leslie's eyes.

"I can stand—I am only shaken," she faltered. "The others?"

"I'm afraid the chauffeur is badly hurt," Leslie replied, but he is not killed. I think mother has just had a shock. She has stood up, you see, and can walk, but she cannot speak. Stay beside her, I will ride for help."

A doctor and a carriage from the Linn

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were soon at hand. Eddie Gower and Terry were practically uninjured, and the chauffeur's injuries were much less serious than had at first appeared to be the case; but Lady Gower was pronounced by the doctor to be in grave danger. She had received internal injuries; though which, with her usual magnificent physical courage, she had risen and walked to the carriage that was to convey her to the Linn.

She lay now, marble-white, with dark brilliant eyes and compressed lips, in her bed. She had continued to sleep nightly in the room in which her husband had died.

"Tell me the truth!" she said to the doctor. "Am I dying?"

"No, no; we'll pull you through, Lady Gower," he replied cheerfully. "Though I don't pretend that you have not been seriously hurt."

But as the long, sunny afternoon wore away, Lady Gower was obviously sinking. Once or twice the brave lips were forced to utter a feeble moan of pain, and Terry, who had stayed with her, could not bear to see the look of anguish in the beautiful eyes. The doctor had stayed at the Linn, and advised that Cora should be given some opiate to lessen her suffering.

"Not yet—not yet!" Lady Gower said feverishly. "I must know if I am going to die. Is there danger?"

The doctor bowed his head.

"You will let me know if there is no longer any hope?" Cora asked, with something of the old, coaxing tone. The doctor promised gravely, looking sympathetically into the beautiful face, and Cora continued to lie, propped up with pillows, gazing right in front of her. Both her sons sat by her, and Terry was at the other side of the bed.

Of what was she thinking? It seemed strange that she should die—she who had been so strong and so beautiful only this morning. Was she still proud and obstinate, still clinging to her secret sin, determined not to confess so long as a chance of life remained?

Thank Heaven, no! Before the doctor had uttered the words which were trembling on his lips Cora spoke.

"Stay, doctor—do not go! I want you and Terry to hear. I have something to say to my sons. Don't think I am crazy —I know what I am saying and can give you the names of people who can prove it. There were papers, too, but I could not find them among Jim's—my husband's—I don't know what he did with them. Eddie, you are your father's eldest son and the true heir."

Then Cora Gower told her story.

"I need not ask you to be good to your brother," she said to Eddie, when she had finished; "and you will forgive your poor father—and I?"

The young man raised one of her white hands and pressed it fondly to his lips, then bent over and kissed her brow.

"Dear mother," he said, "I knew it before."

A lovely light suddenly irradiated the dying woman's face; all that was mean and hard and earthly in it seemed to vanish, leaving it beautiful as the face of an angel.

"Not as other men are!" she said. "I always said that about you—so did your father, so did every one. My dear, dear son! You gave your brother your birthright; I will give you my blessing—the blessing of a poor, wicked woman who has at last made atonement——"

"Don't, don't, dear mother!" the young man interrupted brokenly. "Things are better as they are. I was very happy. I would rather Leslie have it. Let us leave it so."

"No, no!" Lady Gower said. "It would not be right; you know yourself, it would not be right. It would wrong my poor boy, too. Think how you would feel were you in his place! For my sake and your father's do not leave the wrong unrighted. You must both promise me."

They promised; and soon afterward Cora Gower fell into her last sleep.

CHAPTER X.

The "Gower case" supplied the world with material for gossip and wonder for a somewhat longer period than the proverbial nine days. There were features in the case which made it specially interesting, and even the most thoughtless of the public recognized its pathos.

The tragic and violent deaths of Sir James Gower and his wife, occurring as they did within a few months of each other, had already made a considerable sensation; and when the "Gower case" became public property, there were not wanting many who saw in the fatal coincidences the judgment of Heaven; but the majority were content to wonder and pity rather than to blame.

The conduct of the two young men excited general admiration. In the neighborhood of the Linn the affection between the brothers was already a proverb; and it was understood—perhaps dimly—how bitter it must be for both of them to have to reveal the secret that dishonored their dead parents

It was bitter. Over and over again they said to each other that only their solemn promise to the dead woman could have made them "see the thing through." The case was of necessity a long one. When Sir James Gower had made his confession to his son, he had told him of the whereabouts of certain people who could be summoned as witnesses—the Dutch pastor and his wife, the servant who had been with Eleanor before the child's birth, the doctor who had attended her. Cora's own uncle, Doctor Wynne, was now residing in France, but with one exception, all the witnesses had to be summoned from South Africa.

"I wish it were over!" Leslie Gower said impatiently. They still called each other Leslie and Eddie as before—it seemed impossible to effect the change of names.

"It's such an absurd thing, a law case!" the younger brother went on. "I know the truth, and so do you. Yet we can't settle the thing offhand!"

Eddie smiled.

"Eddie," the other went on, "I've been thinking about what I should do after this affair is over, if it ever is over."

"Do? How do you mean, old fellow?"

"I must do something, you know. No, don't stop me! I know what you're going to say, and I believe I know that I'm welcome to half or indeed all of what you have; but—well, you know how you'd feel if you were in my place."

"Perhaps I shouldn't feel exactly as you do," Eddie replied, with a melancholy smile; "but I understand you."

"Well, I've been thinking. I've a little money, you know, that mother left me. I'll go out to Canada and learn farming. I'll be back in a few years," he added, seeing how his brother's expression changed. "I'd like it, really; and, on my honor, if I am ever in want, I'll let you know."

"My dear boy, you haven't enough money to start farming!"

"Well, you can lend me some."

"But"—Eddie hesitated—"there's Terry, Leslie."

"I know," Leslie replied. "I want to speak about her to you. The truth is, Eddie, I'm not so fond as I used to be of Terry."

Had any one else but Terry been concerned, Eddie would have been amused at the naive confession, but as it was, he flushed darkly, looking at his brother in surprise, mingled with anger.

"Well, that sounds rather queer," Leslie said, with a laugh; "but, you see, Terry herself, does not care for me—in fact, I know she loves another man. As I know, also, that she will not be the first to break our engagement—since she feels bound to stick to me in my altered circumstances—why, I must open the subject myself. You must not get excited about it," he added, "or think that I really do care for Terry and am making light of it for your sake—and hers. You always attribute the best motives to people; but I'm quite selfish in this. Terry loves another man, and I love another woman. The other man is yourself, and perhaps you can guess the woman's name. Heaven grant that I may be worthy of her when I come back—for, you see, now I must go away—and may you and Terry be half as happy as you deserve!"

Eddie could not speak, but he silently wrung his brother's hand.

* * * * *

Three years had passed away. It was October again, and Rachel Dene was in the garden, tending her chrysanthemums and dahlias. Now and then she paused in her work and looked, with a wistful, far-away gaze, along the white road that wound amid the richly, colored trees and shadow.

Presently something white appeared, moving along the road. Rachel smiled as the white object drew near. It was a child's cart, pushed by a smart nursemaid dressed in white; Terry, Lady Gower, was walking beside it, and Sir Leslie's son sat in it, in a confusion of white laces and ribbons and swansdown.

Rachel laid down her scissors and ran to the gate, a cluster of brown chrysanthemums, which she held in her hand, showing vividly against her black dress. How pretty Terry looked in her half-mourning! Colonel Ormonde had died soon after his daughter's marriage.

There was a rich bloom in Terry's dark cheeks, a soft light in her eyes, an added grace and dignity in her bearing. Her baby was now a beautiful, healthy child of 10 month, with his father's large violet eyes fringed with black lashes

Rachel bent over the car and kissed the child, feeling deep down in her heart the pang which she always felt and always would feel at the touch of a baby. Then she and Terry walked about the garden and talked, while the nurse followed slowly.

"How is Leslie?" Rachel asked, smiling. "Funny, is it not, how we have learned at last to call him 'Leslie'? A few years ago it seemed as if we should never learn."

"I sometimes make mistakes still," Terry replied. "We had a letter from Eddie this morning, and he says he has made mistakes two or three times with his signature. I must tell you the news —it is such good news! Leslie and I are so happy about it. You remember Doctor Gwynne, Lady Gower's uncle, who was summoned from France as a witness in the 'Gower case'? Well, he has died in Paris and left the whole of his large fortune to Eddie. Leslie has written to persuade him to buy a house somewhere near the Linn—Weston is for sale. Oh, Rachel, won't it be lovely? Leslie has never ceased to regret his brother's absence—and he is such a dear, good fellow! I will be so glad to have him back again."

It was, however, on Rachel's face that

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Terry's dancing eyes looked. A soft rose-color mounted to the young widow's white forehead, then faded away, leaving her very pale.

So he was coming back to England! Rachel remained in her garden after Lady Gower had gone. Aimlessly she wandered along the pathways, now and then plucking a flower, but without knowing what she did.

He was coming back! She felt again the pressure of his strong fingers when he bade her farewell, saw again the look in his blue eyes, heard the quiver in his low voice.

"Rachel, you will remember me—I will find you here when I come back?"

That was all. Hardly a declaration of love, she said to herself, with a scornful smile at her own folly. Why, he had not been more than a boy when he went away—nothing but a handsome boy who had taken a pleasure in the society of a woman some years his senior—and she was a widow.

Yet he had not looked like a boy when he had called her "Rachel" for the first and last time; his voice had not sounded like a boy's voice.

She went indoors, and going to her desk took out the letters he had sent her from Canada. There were only a few of them, for he was not a good letter-writer. Perhaps their composition left a good deal to be desired, and the matter was bold enough. They were merely friendly letters, beginning "Dear Mrs. Dane," ending "Yours sincerely." Sometimes the signature was erased when he had inadvertently written the old name which had been so dear to her and which she could not hear without a thrill.

No, there was nothing in the letters to tell. Rachel went over to the mirror and looked at her face, and could not help smiling. The mirror at least told her that she was young and fair.

How lonely her life had been since her baby had died! How lonely her little house was, with Katie in the kitchen, and the cat lying asleep on the sunny porch, and all the rooms so empty and neat! She loved Terry and rejoiced in her happiness; yet, it somehow hurt her to go to the Linn, full as it was with memories of his bright presence.

He would come back to England and he would go to the Linn. But would he come to her? He must come not as he used to. She would rather that he did not come at all than that he come as the friend of former days. It was too late for that now—she could not bear that. He must come to her heart that was starving in loneliness. He must bring her his love in return for hers. That was what Rachel Dene meant when she asked, "Will he come?"

She put the treasured letters back in the drawer and went again into the garden. The sun was low in the sky now, but it still crossed the landscape with bars and patches of golden red.

She gazed along the road, and a footstep rang out. Some one was striding along the road; soon the tall figure was in sight. There was no other man who could walk just as he did—his shoulders swinging, his head thrown back, the blue eyes bright and eager.

Rachel went to the gate to meet him; and now her hands were clasped in his, his eyes were scanning her face.

"Rachel, Rachel, I came to you first!"

Then Rachel knew that he had really come home.

The end.

* * *

The Sky Smuggler.

(Continued from page three.)

night—should Morgan venture upon his trip."

Why, everything seemed to be working into my hands, and with astonishing ease—this was just what I wanted, and I could not have been better pleased unde any circumstances. So I clasped his hand and squeezed it.

"That suits me to a dot, for I happen to feel just like indulging in some sort of an adventure just now; and what could appeal more to a fellow than a moonlight voyage in a big dirigible balloon. Of course I'll go with you, and if you have any literature bearing on the subject be so kind as to loan it to me at once, so that I may study up a bit. I'd like to make myself useful as well as ornamental, in case we become shipmates in the clouds," I exclaimed earnestly; and my manner seemed fairly to delight Breen, who had had a difficult time in the past to coax any one to be his companion aloft.

He said he had a few pamphlets describing the workings of such an aerial craft as he commanded, which he would be only too well pleased to hand over to me if I would accompany him back to his room in the club house.

This I did, and soon had the papers tucked away in my inner pocket; for he asked me not to disclose the fact to any one, lest they guess that I meant to be his partner in the voyage—of course this suited me from the ground up, for it certainly was no part of my scheme to have Morgan know that I intended to be close on his heels; since all of his former suspicions, set at rest by those papers which he had read during the night, when looking through my pockets, would be once more aroused by my actions.

"Remember, Odell, my son, you must hang around after nightfall—keep near me all the time, for when we do go it will be in a hurry. I have to gauge my movements by those of the man in the biplane—when he gets up in the air at a certain distance, and before he gives the shot to signify that he is off on his southerly trip, we must cut loose and mount rapidly in order to keep him in sight. You understand all that, I suppose?" he asked.

Of course I said I did, knowing that a porous plaster would not stick tighter than I would that same evening to my friend, Breen, the man of the dirigible.

I really enjoyed that day, even though it seemed everlastingly long, because of my anxiety to have the thing completed, and either success or rank failure chalked up against my record. There was much to interest a fellow with red blood in his veins, with those air machines taking short flights under the instructions of Captain Simeon; and the talk was all of sport in the open, a subject that was beginning to be rather fascinating to me, especially after I had learned that Tressie could use a gun with astonishing skill, and according to the tales told by her proud dad, had many times brought down her deer, winning out in competition with hunters of established reputation.

I even began to consider whether I had not lost considerable of real enjoyment in so seldom having gone into camp, and was resolved that in the future I would do better, and seek opportunities to live in the open; but then I reflected ruefully, how much more enjoyable such camping experiences would prove if one only had a companion along, capable of making delicious biscuits—and when I found my thoughts traveling along this forbidden track I brought myself up sharply, and called a certain fellow by the name of Bob Merriles a jackass and a fool, to ever allow himself to imagine he could win the daughter of the man he expected to balk in his clever scheme for defrauding the United States Government.

Then I turned my attention again to the pamphlets loaned by Breen, and endeavored to glean a little theoretical knowledge concerning dirigibles, so that in case I were called upon in a hurry to assist my companion I would at least know the several parts, and not make a stupid blunder calculated to bring about disaster. This consumed the better part of the morning

After lunch the same sort of tactics took up the attention of those who lingered at the club this late in the season; for the tang of frost was certainly in the air, and those who yearned for the fleshpots of Israel had long since hastened back to the cities, where such good things awaited them.

Outside of Morgan's daughter there was not a girl around, save the chambermaid and the cook, both of them scrawny Scotchwomen.

Of course it was natural that Tressie should come in for considerable favor under the circumstances; but I noted that the young fellows treated her with the utmost respect, and that she paid very little attention to them as a rule, keeping close to her father and assisting him in his work, as though every matter connected with a biplane were familiar to her—a fact I had cause to remember later on.

So the afternoon wore away, and I was pleased to see the western sun drawing closer and closer to the horizon; for it brought the crisis nearer, and for one, I heartily wished the business over.

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as its humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. Be wise and attend to this today.

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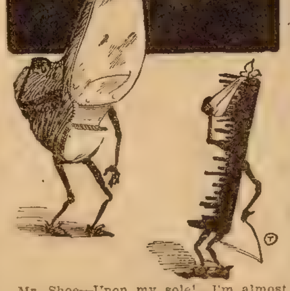

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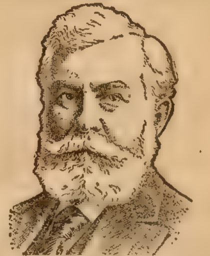

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The Merry Goose Mine.

(Continued from page twenty-three.)

and no sign of life was visible. The sun had gone down and the shadows of night were fast gathering.

A sudden sense of impending danger came over Dan, and moved by a sudden impulse, he stopped. The man wheeled quickly. "What is the matter?" he asked.

As he spoke he took a step and came close to Dan's side. There was something menacing in his manner and tone, which caused Dan's heart to leap with sudden fear.

"Where are you taking me?" demanded Dan, stepping back involuntarily. Quick as flash the man laid his hand roughly on the youth's shoulder and held him in a grip of iron.

"If you make any noise I'll break your neck!" he hissed. "Now, you just keep quiet and listen to me. I want you to come with me, and mind that you don't cheep!"

Dan almost cried out in pain from the iron-like grip on his shoulder, and a dreadful fear assailed him. He felt that he was in the power of a robber or a madman, and the grip on his shoulder convinced him of the futility of resistance. "Who are you, and what does this mean?" demanded Dan.

"You'll find out soon enough," was the reply. "Just you keep as still as a mouse and you won't be hurt." He turned his face down the valley. "Come on, Jim," he added, "and be in a hurry!"

"Comin'," replied a gruff voice from the cover of the thicket, and the dark form of a man emerged from the shadows and ran swiftly in the direction of Dan and his captor.

Dan's mind was in a confused whirl. It had all happened so suddenly that he had no time for reflection. But though he felt that he was but a child in the hands of the burly ruffian, he would not yield without a struggle.

There was not a moment to lose. Quick as a flash he stooped, and with a twist that was a marvel of quickness, he slipped from the man's clutches. Then he threw himself forward blindly and leaped down the slope.

With a furious oath the man darted in pursuit, hurling his burly form forward as if shot from a catapult; but Dan was more than his match in quickness, and by an adroit turn eluded his grasp and leaped down the incline. He would now have made good his escape, but at that moment the other man, who was rushing to the assistance of his pal, leaped upon Dan and bore him to the ground.

Dan realized that further struggling was useless, and in a few moments he was bound, and a gag thrust between his jaws. The two men then lifted him and bore him swiftly through tangled thickets in the deep hollow, presently coming to an open spot where some sort of a vehicle stood close to a dim road leading into the hills. Dan was placed in the cart, and the two men, entering it started the horse at a brisk trot over the stony road.

How far they traveled Dan could not tell. They traversed hills and hollows and pushed through tangled underbrush, keeping a swift gait for more than an hour. At length the cart came to a stop. Dan was lifted out and conducted through a dense thicket for some distance, bringing up at last at the base of a rocky declivity, fringed with a dense growth of underbrush and a tangle of creeping vines

It was too dark to distinguish anything, and Dan was led blindly through the interlacing vines along the verge of the cliff for several yards. Then a torch was lighted, and as the vines were pushed aside, an opening in the cliff was revealed. Dan was pushed into the opening, and as he entered he perceived that he was in a cavern that widened at every step.

"Now, Jim," said one of the men, turning to the other, "you just go back and look after the horse and cart and I'll take charge of the kid."

"All right," responded the man addressed as "Jim," "just as soon as I can get a light."

He drew a miner's lamp from his pocket, and lighting it, made his way toward the entrance of the cavern.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Dan was conducted through a long passage, which narrowed at many points to a mere hole between the rocky walls, arriving at last in a large chamber that might have quartered a company of soldiers.

At one end of the chamber a fire smouldered in a niche in the wall, beside which was piled a stack of wood. Scattered here and there were various articles of furniture and cooking utensils, with blankets and skins, showing that the chamber was used as a place of habitation. Here a halt was made and the gag was removed from Dan's mouth and the cords from his limbs.

"I guess you won't try to get away," remarked Dan's captor, composedly. "It won't do you any good to try it, and it may do you a whole lot of harm," he added.

Dan felt greatly relieved at his release from his bonds, and seating himself on one of the rude stools with which the chamber was furnished, he looked at his captor questioningly.

"Will you please tell me what you mean by bringing me here?" he asked.

"I don't mind in the least," replied the man, lighting his pipe and surveying the youth with a calm scrutiny. "I am just now in need of a little money, and it occurred to me that I might arrange with you to supply me with what I need."

"Then you are a robber?" cried Dan, indignantly, though a feeling of sudden fear assailed him.

"Well, we shall not quarrel over that point, though you put it rather roughly," remarked the robber.

"I have but a few dollars," replied Dan, "and you might have taken what I have without taking the trouble to bring me here."

The man laughed. "You don't think we'd be doing such a ten-cent business as that, I hope," he remarked. "I'm not the one to hold up a kid for a few pennies."

"Then why not let me go?" demanded Dan.

"Because," the man said slowly, "we are going to get five thousand dollars out of you before you see the light of day!"

The speaker closed his lips and sat puffing at his pipe in silence.

Dan was startled at the man's words He knew now that the robbers intended to hold him for ransom! That put a more serious phase on the matter.

"I have a little matter to settle with you," the outlaw said, after a brief silence. "Maybe you can guess what it is?"

Dan gazed at the speaker curiously.

"I don't understand," he said, still puzzled.

"You don't know me then?"

"I never saw you before that I can remember."

"You saw me all right."

"When and where?'

"Down by the river one night. You remember a couple of guests that were putting up a job to crack the safe at Ables' store?'

Dan uttered a gasp of amazement and his face paled. The robber smiled. "I thought you would remember," he said

Dan's heart sank with sudden fear. It was all plain to him now. The robber who sat before him was none other than Dave Stover, who, in company with "Silver" the gambler, had planned to rob the safe in Sam Able's grocery store. Dan recognized the man now, though he had but an indistinct view of him that night on the river bank. But had Stover not been captured and sent to jail? How, then, did it happen that he was at large? As if in answer to this thought, the robber continued:

"You were the cause of my getting pinched, and now that I have regained my liberty, I feel that it is nothing but just that you should pay me for the inconvenience you have caused me. Oh, you needn't try to deceive me. I know you are the one that put the officers onto our game. I heard all about it since I escaped from the county jail. I also heard how you have just got a fortune of ten thousand dollars out of some land over by Agateville, and that is why I have made you my guest for a little time. As a young man of fortune you interest me in a measure, and I want to study you at close range."

He paused and gazed at the youth through a cloud of smoke.

"What do you mean to do?" Dan asked, with all the calmness he could muster.

"Do? Oh, we'll come to that by and by," answered Dave Stover, nodding slowly. "My 'pardner' and I want five thousand between us. We need the money, and we are going to give you time to think of the best way of getting it for us."

"But I have but a small sum with me," said Dan. "As for the ten thousand you speak of, that is in the hands of my guardian, and he is fifty miles from here. It is very hard to reach him."

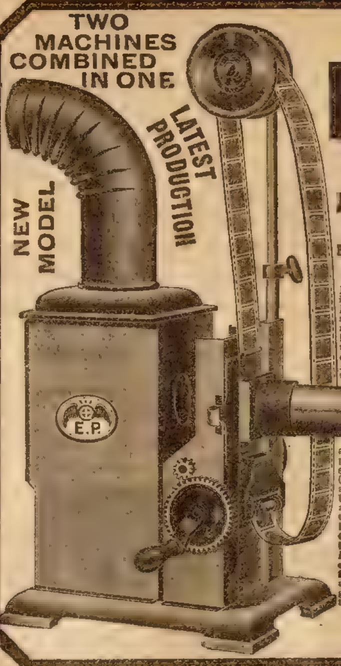
"We understand that all right. We're going to give you time to get word to him."

"But I shall send no word to him," interposed Dan, resolutely.

"Don't be too hasty, young fellow. You don't know what you are going to do. You'll be wiser when we are through with you. You'll send word to your guardian when we say the word, and you'll be might glad to do it."

There was something in the robber's words and tone that sent a thrill of fear to Dan's heart. Dave Strover was a desperate man, and he was capable of resorting to desperate means in order to accomplish hid ends. Dan realized this, and reflected that there was nothing to be gained by open rebellion.

(Concluded next week.)



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THE MERRY GOOSE MINE;

Or, Dan Newton's Up-Hill Fight

By WILL LISENBEE

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CHAPTER XXIX.

SO YOU can tell me where I can find Basil Newton?" he said.

"He is dead," replied Dan.

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir. I am his son."

"Indeed? I am glad to meet you, Mr Newton." He leaned over and shook hands with Dan. "Is your mother living?" he asked.

"No, sir; she died several years ago."

"Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"No, sir."

"Then you are the sole heir to your father's estate?"

"Yes, sir,"

"You are a minor, of course?"

"Yes, sir. I am sixteen."

"Have you a guardian or an administrator?"

"No, sir. My father left but little property, and it was not thought necessary to have either, I suppose.'

"I understand," nodded Frederick Illington. "The forty-acre tract was not considered of much, if any, value. Well, to come to the point, I should like to buy the land, but as you are a minor, nothing can be done till the court has authorized some one to act for you."

Dan nodded assent.

"Have you some one in view whom you would like to have appointed?" asked the capitalist.

"Yes, sir; Judge Turkington, an old friend of my father, would no doubt take the responsibility." Dan replied.

"Judge Turkington?" echoed Illington. "Why, I know Judge Turkington quite well. A noble and honorable man he is, and an excellent man he would be to look after your affairs. But is he not traveling in some distant part of the country?"

"He has returned, and is now living at his home in Springhaven."

"That is fortunate. I should advise you to communicate with him at once so that you may have some one to act for you. I have reasons for this. The forty-acre tract lies adjoining the land owned by the Paddington Mining Company. This company, as you may know, has recently struck a rich vein of lead and jack on its land adjoining yours, and the shaft, as near as I could ascertain, is very near the line."

"Is it possible?" cried Dan. "I heard of the strike made by the company, but at that time I did not know that it was so near the forty-acre tract left by my father. In fact, I knew nothing about where the land was situated, excepting that it was somewhere in the county."

"Of course," went on Frederick Illington, "the discovery of lead and zinc so near your land will greatly augment its value. I have purchased about three hundred acres in the locality, a forty of which adjoins yours on the south. I am in the market to purchase yours whenever you get ready to sell, provided we can agree on a price. Meantime, if you have offers from others, I want you to understand that I am ready to pay ten thousand dollars for the forty acres."

Ten thousand dollars! Dan could scarcely realize what it meant to him. It seemed an immense fortune.

"I am not going to say the land is worth that figure," went on Mr. Illington, "for that is more than twice the price I paid for some other tracts near it, but the discovery of a rich lead and zinc mine so near the line is sufficient to justify the belief that it may be rich in mineral. However, one must take the chance of being mistaken, and I am willing to take that chance. Do you live in the city?"

"No, sir, I am making my home at Jacktown, where I have been at work in the mines."

"Indeed? Then you are almost on the ground where the new strike was made, when shall you return?"

"Tomorrow."

"So soon? When did you arrive?"

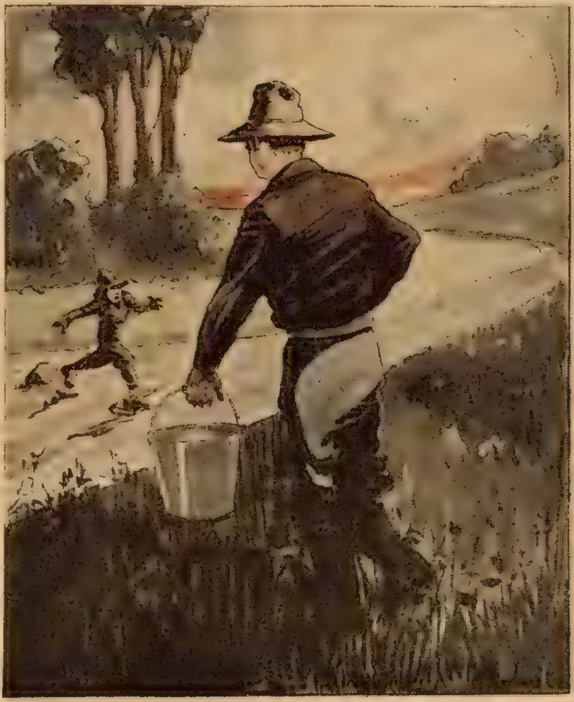
"This morning."

"Direct from Jacktown?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then we must have come on the same train."

"We did, sir. I recognized you as the gentleman that sat in front of me on the stage from Jacktown to the railroad station."



He heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Why, bless me! you are the boy I saw on the stage. I thought I had seen you before," exclaimed Mr. Illington. "Was it on business relating to the land that you came to the city?"

"No, sir. I came on business for my employer, Mr. Hickman, who owns a mine at Jacktown."

"May I ask how you found out that I was trying to discover the whereabouts of your father?" Mr. Illington asked.

"Certainly, sir. I overheard your conversation with the elderly gentleman who sat in the seat with you in the stage, and I looked at my father's deed, which I happened to have in my valise, and found that John Miller and wife had executed the deed. This was the connecting link in the chain, so I came to see you."

"By George! that was quite cleverly done!" laughed Mr. Illington, gazing at Dan in admiration. "You don't seem to be in any pressing need of a guardian, except to legalize your transactions"

Dan colored slightly at the compliment. "I think I should prefer to rely on the judgment of Judge Turkington," he said with a smile.

"Which goes still further to prove your sound judgment," nodded Frederick Illington.

Dan rose to go. "I am glad to have met you, my boy," said Mr. Illington, also rising. "So you will return tomorrow to Jacktown?"

"Yes, sir; that is my intention."

Mr. Illington reflected a moment. "I have a mind to accompany you," he said. "Business will take me back in a few days, anyway, and I should like to run over to Springhaven and see Judge Turkington. We might run over together, and you could have your affairs arranged while I was there."

"I should be pleased to have you come," replied Dan. "I think my affairs could soon be arranged so that we could give you an answer to your offer for the land. Then I should like to have you see Judge Turkington in person and talk the matter over with him."

"Very well, then I shall go. The train leaves the Union Depot at—let me see—ten-twenty, I think."

"Yes, sir; that is the time."

"Then I will be on hand at the proper time."

They went down town together, and separating at Ninth street, Dan went to the hotel for his valise.

At four o'clock he arrived at the office of Mills & Gregor, where he found Mr. Gregor waiting for him.

They took the cable cars up town, and after visiting some interesting places in the city, they stopped at a handsome residence on Independence avenue, which was Mr. Gregor's home.

Mr. Gregor had no family excepting his wife, a kindly-faced woman of forty, who gave Dan a friendly greeting and tried to make him feel at home. After supper—for this was before the fashion of calling it six o'clock dinner had reached as far west as Kansas City—Mr. Gregor invited Dan into the library.

"So you shall return to Jacktown tomorrow?" asked Mr. Gregor.

"Yes, sir. Important business makes

"Have you received some word from Mr. Hickman?"

"No, sir, but I have received information of exceedingly good fortune."

(Continued on page twenty-two.)

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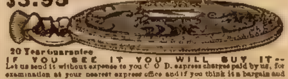

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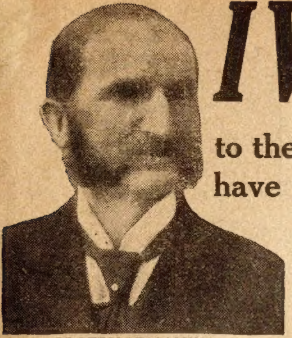

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Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I have a letter dated Oct. 17, 1910, when I began to take your treatment for diabetes. I must say that I am entirely well of that dread disease now. I have a friend that wants to take treatment with you. Please send one of your information blanks for him to fill out.

(Signed) ROMEO TRACHT.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Monroe City, Mo., March 18, 1911.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—It is nearly a year since my son commenced and took two months' treatment from you, and he seems entirely well. Your charges are so reasonable. I have moved to Monroe City, so my address is changed from Florida, Mo., to

(Signed) MRS. FANIE O. DANIEL, Monroe City, Mo.

LIVER TROUBLE.

Heber Springs, Ark., April 6, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—Yours at hand and noted in regard to your treatment, and will say in reply I find it all you claim for it and it has brought me out all O. K. I have left enought yet for two weeks, and will not need any more after that is gone.

I thank you very kindly for what you have done for me, and will refer others to you when I know they are in need of treatment. Thanking you again, I am

Most respectfully yours,
(Signed) JAS. H. BRINK, Heber Springs, Ark.

LIVER TROUBLE.

Edinburgh, Miss., June 29, 1911

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—From neglect I have not written you which should have been done some time ago to let you know how I am getting along. I feel alright, and I haven't lost a day's work out of my crop since I commenced your treatment. I have gained 30 pounds. I thought I would hold up a while and see if my health was good; if not, will know where to get more.

Now, you may be sure I will help you all I can. Thanking you many times for the good you have done me, I am,

Your friend,
(Signed) P. P. MOONEY, Edinburgh, Miss.

HEART AND CATARRH.

Eldorado Springs, Mo., June 22, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—Your treatment has done the work for me and my son. I do my work without any trouble since I took your remedy. It has done me more good than all the doctors and drugs in my life. Should you need my sworn testimony, you can have it freely. Yours turly,

(Signed) MR. M. SAXER,
R. D. No. 3, Eldorado Springs, Mo.

HEART DISEASE 25 YEARS.

Cloud Chief, Ok., Aug. 25, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—In reply to your letter just received, I will say your wonderful treatment through the eye has cured me of heart disease of twenty-five years standing, also stomach trouble, constipation and nervousness of the worst kind. I am in better health than I have been for thirty-two years. I can eat anything, and can sleep so well and restful.

I would advise anyone with heart trouble, constipation and nervousness to try your remedy, for it will surely cure. I haven't words to express my appreciation to you for what it has done for me. I would not accept all the riches of the world and be placed back like I was when I commenced your grand treatment. I will not send for any more now, but when I get the money I will have more for my deafness. It has helped the head noises and deafness to a great extent.

May God bless you and prolong your life to help suffering humanity, and when He calls you to your great reward, may you not let your remedy be buried with you, is the sincere prayer of one of your patients.

(Signed) MRS. R. D. WARD,
R. F. D. No. 2, Cloud Chieg, Ok.

DIABETES AND BLADDER TROUBLE.

Caldwell, Kas., Aug. 21, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—The first of April I received from you three bottles for a three months' course of treatment. I was at the time suffering (and had been for months) with severe diabetes and bladder trouble in their worst form. Only those who realize what this disease is can understand how almost hopeless it is. In a few days I felt that it had begun to improve; my system began to respond to your treatment, and the third month I feel that I am entirely cured.

Yours truly,
(Signed) MRS. R. W. LIGGETT, Caldwell, Kas.

HEART TROUBLE.

Rosedale, Ind., Sept. 5, 1911.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Kind Sir:—I should have written you long ago, but I have been feeling fine and doing all of my work: I can walk two miles now where I could not walk across the room when I wrote you, and I cannot say too much of what you have done for me. If I need your assistance again, I surely will write you.

(Signed) AMANDA GRINDLE,
R. R. No. 3, Box No. 134, Rosedale, Ind.

RHEUMATISM.

National Soldiers' Home, Tenn., April 11, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Prof. Samuels:—I do not need any more of your great medicine for I feel that I am well again. It has cured me of many ills. May you prosper and be happy.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) RICHARD C. M. BURTON,
National Soldiers' Home, Tenn.

KIDNEY TROUBLE.

Santa Cruz, Cal., Aug. 23, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I stopped taking your medicine sometime ago because my kidneys no longer troubled me, and am still feeling fine.

Gratefully yours,
(Signed) LOUISE MUSSE,
14 Keystone Ave., Santa Cruz, Cal.

NEURALGIA.

Taylorside, Sask., Canada.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I have to thank you for the great benefit I have received from your wonderful treatment. I had been bad for a long time, and now after taking one bottle of your treatment I feel that I am completely cured. I remain,

Yours sincerely, (Signed) MRS. AGNES WARE

GENERAL TROUBLE.

Ft. Cobb, Ok., May 17, 1911.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—Pardon me for not writing you sooner as I have been quite busy. My three months' treatment is past, though I am still taking it and will until it is all gone, for it has made such a wonderful change in me. I can't hardly get sleep enough nor enough to eat, and feel almost as well as I ever did. I don't begrudge the money, and I tell everyone about it as I would like to see all cured.

(Signed) MRS. A. J. CLARY, R. No. 4, Ft. Cobb, Ok.

P. S.—Prof. Samuels, my husband says to tell you that he hasn't language to express his gratitude for the good you have done him. He certainly is praising you to everyone that mentions his treatment. He is looking well and don't cough any more. I certainly feel thankful myself.

LAGRIPPE.

Annadel, Tenn., July 5, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—In regard to your treatment, it is all that you cliam for it. My cough is gone, and I am doing my work and sleep fine. Do not think I will need any more treatment. Wishing you sucess, I am, Yours truly,

(Signed) MRS. JOHN BLAKE, Annadel, Tenn.

NERVOUSNESS.

Ridgefield, Conn., Sept. 20th, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I received you letter quite a few days ago, but put off answering it.

I certainly am very thankful to you for the good and great benefit my daughter has derived from the use of the treatment prescribed by you. I feel confident now that she is cured of the nervous trouble. She has been having trouble with her eyes again, although they are better now. She has to go once a week for treatment for them. I didn't know but what this nervous trouble would come back, but I guess that is fully cured.

I don't feel that I can thank you enough for the good you have done, and will always remain your friend.

(Signed) MRS. LEMUEL BARRETT, Ridgefield, Conn.

KIDNEY TROUBLE.

Roby, Fisher County, Tex., Sept. 14th, 1911.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I will write to inform you of the success of your two months' treatment for Kidney Trouble and why I can truthfully say it is the most wonderful thing on earth to know of your good work, for I know I was not able to do a day's work and now I can do as much as any man, but if I feel like I need another month's treatment I will send at once.

I assure you I am doing all I can to get others to take your treatment, that I know are suffering. Wishing you God-speed in your wonderful work, I am,

Very truly yours,
(Signed) J. M. MILLER, Roby, Fisher Co., Tex.

RHEUMATISM AND DEAFNESS.

Hartman, Ark., Feb. 2, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I received a month's treatment from you on the 30th of January for my wife, and she has been using it since as you directed and it is helping her. She was helpless with rheumatism and now she can go about the place where she pleases and has gained eight pounds in weight. She was almost deaf and now she can hear common talk. I think by the time she uses up the treatment that she will be entirely well. I had two doctors with her and they both said they could do her no good.

Thanking you most kindly for what you have done for her, I am, Yours very truly,

(Signed) P H. MORGAN, Hartman, Ark.

CATARRHAL, DEAFNESS AND EYE TROUBLE.

Ava, Mo.

Prof. Samuels.

Dear Sir:—Send R. A. Kennedy of this place two or three symptom blanks with some of your advertising matter, as he wishes to fill in the symptom blanks and send you. In my case I have been taking the treatment now about a week, and it has improved my eyes greatly. As to seeing, I have to wear glasses and could not read fine print without them. Now I can read fairly well. My cough is considerably better and it seems I can hear a little better, as I was hard of hearing. As to the bladder trouble, I can see no change as yet. Will continue treatment regularly, and report any change. Send me some of the advertising matter with a few symptom blanks. I can distribute them to good advantage.

Yours truly, (Signed) M. C. REYNOLDS.

PARALYSIS AND GENERAL TROUBLE.

Opelousas, La., June 21, 1910.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I have received and began taking your treatment on the 9th inst., and I am proud to say that I received beneficial results in twenty-four hours after the first dose. My eyesight has improved 100 per cent.; the pains in all my limbs have been greatly relieved. In fact all my ills are relieved. I feel altogether much better.

I desire to thank you heartily for the relief you have procured for me, and hope and trust it will continue for the better, until a permanent cure is effected.

You will find inclosed names of persons affected with chronic diseases. I have also given your name and address to several other parties whom you must have heard from by this time. Thanking you again, I am

Yours gratefully,
(Signed) D. F. DUPREE, Opelousas, La., R. No. 2.

NOW ABLE TO DO A DAY'S WORK.

Pollock, La., May 21, 1910.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Sir:—After thanking you for your kindly interest in my welfare, would say that I have grown so much better under your treatment that I am able to do a good day's work and will wait a month or two to see how it will last. Respectfully yours,

(Signed) D. N. BRAKEFIELD, Pollack, La.

KIDNEY AND STOMACH TROUBLE.

Bruce, S. D., Oct. 23, 1910.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I received your letter quite a few days ago, but have put off answering it.

I am certainly very thankful to you for the good and great benefit I have derived from the use of the treatment prescribed by you. What I suffered before I commenced to take your method of treatment is beyond me to describe. The comfort I now have in living and being able to go about and enjoy my food and drink as others do, is simply wonderful. I extend to you my sincere thanks. Very gratefully and respectfully,

MRS. WILLIAM HOFFMAN, Bruce, S. Dak., R. No. 2.

A STRANGE AND PECULIAR METHOD OF HEALING

CATARRH AND BRIGHT'S DISEASE.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Roscommon, Mich., April 25, 1911.

Dear Sir:—Your letter duly received, and I must say that your treatment hit the right spot, and I feel like a new man, and do not think I will have to have any more now for a while; and I am thanking you ever so much for your kindness. Hoping that everything may go well with you, I remain. As ever yours,

(Signed) D. F. EDMONSON, Roscommon, Mich.

KIDNEY AND LIVER.

Spenceville, Cal., June 21, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I write now to tell you that I think I am cured after taking three months' treatment.

I have been sick with kidney and liver trouble for eight years, and for sixteen months have not been able to stand on my feet, but now the doctor says I am a cured man, and I sincerely thank you for what you have done for me and if I should need more medicine at any time I will let you know. Wishing you all the success, I remain,

Yours truly,
(Signed) J. W. PITTMAN, Spenceville, Nevada Co., Cal.

NERVOUSNESS.

Escondido, Cal., Sept. 3, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Friend:—I will write you a few lines to say that I am improving fast, and I wish to state that your treatment I know has done wonders in building up my nerves and helping the catarrh in my head, and in fact, I am much better every way since commencing it, though I have had to use it a long time, but now I think I can get along without it.

I wish to thank you for your kindness in sending me the treatment so long, but I certainly was a wreck when I began. It certainly has been a great benefit to me, and as you already know, A. W. Henderson, my brother, is responsible for my using the treatment. I wish you success and long life, with God's blessing. Yours truly,

(Signed) MRS. M. E. SMITH, Escondido, Cal.

NERVOUSNESS.

Snohomish, Wash., Sept. 3, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I think I am cured well enough so I can get along without medicine. The last months' treatment has done it alright, for which I send you my best wishes and thanks.

Respectfully yours,
(Signed) CHARLES FEYL, R. No. 4, Snohomish, Wash.

GENERAL TROUBLE.

Gibbs, Mo., Sept. 9, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—On receipt of your letter, will say I neglected to write to you when I finished treatment. I felt I was cured and didn't need but the three months' treatment. I don't feel any more of those old ailments I used to have, but I think my age has begun to work on me, and if I need any more treatment at any time for that, you can be sure I will try yours again. I know now it will cure diseases.

My daughter, Mrs. Swindig of Colorado, is taking your treatment now and says she is so much better. My neighbors are both better by taking same, and my brother-in-law says he would not take $500.00 for what good it has done him. I can only say I thank Prof. Samuels for my cure and give God the glory for it all.

(Signed) MRS. J. W. MARTIN, Gibbs, Mo.

RHEUMATISM.

Buxton, Ia. Sept. 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I received your letter in regard to how I am getting along. I can say I feel better since I took your treatment than I have felt for twenty-five years.

Times have been so hard that I have not been able to send, but just as soon as I can, I will send for treatment.

Your truly,
(Signed) PHILIP G. THOMAS, Buxton, Ia.

GOITRE.

Weiser, Idaho, Sept. 5. 1911.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—In reply to yours of recent date will say that your remedy has helped my eyes; they don't run water now if I use them a good deal. I have been doing some very fine fancy knitting since I used your treatment and find it don't tire my eyes like it used to tire them.

The pimples I was troubled with in my hair are all gone and also those on my neck. Don't send me any more of your medicine now. I still have some, and if I find I need more, I will write you. Yours very gratefully,

(Signed) MRS. SARAH S. ANDREWS,
R. F. D. No. 1 Weiser, Idaho.

CONSUMPTION.

Carrizo Springs, Tex., Aug. 16, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I will answer your letter, I received a few days ago, in regard to my health.

Before I began taking your treatment I was sick all the time. My stomach hurt all the time; but a short time after I began the treatment it stopped that distressing feeling. I thank you more than tongue can tell for what you have done for me. I recommend your treatment to all my friends that are sick. (Signed)

MRS. L. TEMPLER, Box 181, Carrizo Springs, Tex.

EYE TROUBLE.

Tisdale, Sask., Canada, Sept. 14th, 1911.

Prof. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—I am very sorry that I have not written you sooner. It was my intention this last six weeks, but somehow I never seemed to get it done. We are so busy with the harvest it keeps me very busy from morning till night.

I am very pleased to say that my boy's eyes are now all right, and I don't think we will need any more treatment at present. His eyes are quite clear and bright looking, and I cannot thank you enough for your treatment. Should he ever need any more I will send for it.

Thanking you once again, I remain, yours truly,

(Signed) MRS. ROBT. WILKINSON,
Auto Rd., Tisdale, Sask., Canada

CONSUMPTION AND KIDNEY TROUBLE.

Orange Park, Fla., Sept. 10th, 1911.

Prof. H. Samuels, Wichita, Kas.

Dear Sir:—My wife was almost at death's door with Consumption and Kidney Trouble. She has just taken one month's course of your treatment and it has performed miracles. She says she is well, and is apparently. The cough and spitting have all gone, and her kidneys are in a normal condition.

It is certainly marvelous what a change in a short time. I think she should have another month's treatment, but she says not. May you live many, many years more to do the good work. I will recommend all sick people to you. Very truly yours,

(Signed) HIRAM BURGESS, Orange Park, Fla.

MY METHOD OF TREATNENT

The method of treatment which I have originated is a strange and peculiar method, differing from anything else used by any living man in the treatment of diseases. I do not use drastic drugs and medicines that doctors depend upon.

Men who are familiar with the chemistry of the human body understand that only the chemical elements used in the creation of the body are required to restore it to health when once its functional power becomes impaired. Nature does not require a mass of drugs dumped into the stomach, which merely represent an accumulation of foreign substances, which must eventually be eliminated from the system. When Mother Nature created mankind she used no mercury, no strychnine, no quinine, no digitalis, no morphine or other poisonous chemicals such as the doctors delight to prescribe for you, and she needs none of them to accomplish any restorative work that may be necessary in your behalf.

My results are obtained by dropping a colorless liquid which I prepare into the eye. Strange as it may seem, so-called incurable cases of **Consumption, Bright's Disease, Dropsy, Epileptic Fits, Nervous Prostration, Heart Disease, Asthma, Hay Fever, Blindness, Deafness, Liver Trouble, Kidney Trouble, Stomach Trouble, and Catarrh** are treated in this apparent miraculous way. My system is based absolutely on scientific principles. The eye is the window of the soul. I have evolved a system of treating other bodily ills, based upon the relation of the eye to the system as a whole. This may seem strange, but my thousands of patients testify to the value of my treatment.

If you are sick or ailing you will find something in my Message of Facts, which I am sending free to everyone, that will greatly interest you. I explain my method of healing and give you absolute proof of its value. If you are tired of taking strong drugs into the stomach, if you have gotten to the point where you believe there is no hope, if you have tried all kinds of treatment your doctor could suggest without its benefiting you, write me today for my Message of Facts. It tells you something about the peculiar liquid which I prepare, and of a more scientific and more natural method of treatment. Send me the coupon properly filled out or send me your name and address on a postcard and my "Message of Facts" will be sent you by return mail free.

FREE

If you are sick my ***"Message of Facts"*** will tell you some things about the diseases of the human body and the logical method of treatment which will be new and interesting to you. Fill out the coupon and mail to me today, and my "MESSAGE OF FACTS" will be mailed to you postpaid, without any obligation of any kind upon your part. Write today—this hour—as this advertisement may not appear again. *Send the Coupon* ☞

PROF. SAMUELS, 62 Samuels Building, WICHITA, KANSAS.

CUT OUT AND MAIL TODAY

Prof. Samuels, Room 62, Samuels Building, Wichita, Kansas,
Please send me free your "Message of Facts" and full particulars.

NAME ....
TOWN ....
STATE ....
R. F. D. or Street ....

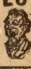
AGENTS 100% PROFIT

New, Patented, Combination Tool

Sells in every home. Big demand. Low price to agents. Fast seller. 10 tools in one. Drop forged from finest steel. $5.60 worth of tools for the price of one. Jack Wood sold 100 in one week, his profit $80.00. Write quick for free sample to workers.

THOMAS TOOL CO.
3317 Barny St. Dayton, Ohio

15 QUALITY Post Cards 10c
Pretty girls, sentimental, art, etc. 5 colors, embossed, etc. No Trash. C. DUER, Andover, Ohio



LOTS OF FUN FOR A DIME

Ventriloquists Double Throat Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary and imitate birds and beasts of field and forest. LOADS OF FUN. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Price only 10 cents; 4 for 25 cents or 12 for 50 cents.
DOUBLE THROAT CO. DEPT. D FRENCHTOWN, N. J.

This FREE Recipe Cures Weak Men

If you are suffering from nervous debility, lack of vigor, weakened manhood, failing memory, or lame back, brought on by excesses, unnatural drains, or the follies of youth, and you have become discouraged and disheartened by repeated failures, and wish to be restored to health, strength, and vigor, write me today and I will send you this Invigorating Prescription in a plain sealed envelope FREE OF CHARGE, so that you can cure yourself at home privately, and thus banish all your troubles. I have used this prescription in my practice for over twenty years, and I have proof that it reaches the seat of the trouble, and sets it bubbling with new life. Write today and receive it FREE. Address DR. FRANKLIN ROBERTS, No. 125 Butler Bldg., Marshall, Mich.

BLOOD POISON CAN BE CURED

If you have ulcers, mucous patches in the mouth, sore throat, eruptions, copper colored spots on your body, falling hair, swolen glands, pains in the bones, or severe continued headaches, our special treatment will cure you. Our DR. PANTER, former chief physician of the original Cook Remedy Co., treated over 22,000 patients of that company in the fifteen years ending May 12th, 1908, the date that company discontinued taking cases to treat. DON'T BE MISLED with offers of Free Treatment, that stimulate the system for a short time. RELIABLE CURES ARE NOT FREE. Our treatment has stood the test for 25 years and have never been compelled to offer *free treatments* to procure patients. Booklet on Blood Poison, testimonials and full information about your case, FREE. Write

PANTER REMEDY CO.,
Suite 309 67 Clark Street, Chicago Ill.

No Obstructoin.

In the course of a trial at Waterbury, Conn., the examiner was trying to get the topography of the country and the relative situation of objects. The witness was asked, "Which way does the road run past your house?" The reply was, "Both ways, your honor, up and down."

DON'T WAIT

Send your name today, and we will mail you a full $1 box of Biel's Nerve Tablets on trial. If they prove that they will restore you to health, give back your vigor, and make you feel strong, healthy and vigorous, equal to the pleasures of life, send us $1, otherwise we ask nothing—not a penny, we leave it to you to judge. If you are run down, have dizzy spells, are Nervous, Lack Strength, Vim, Vigor, Vitality, poor Memory, Appetite, are thin, pain over heart side or shoulder, send your name and address at once for a box on trial. When sure that they are what we claim for them by actual trial, then you pay us $1, but if uncertain, you pay nothing. Let us prove it to you. Write today.
BIEL MFG. CO. Dept. 1120 Denver, Colo.

$3.50 Recipe Free, For Weak Men.

Send Name and Address Today—You Can Have it Free and Be Strong and Vigorous.

I have in my possession a prescription for nervous debility, lack of vigor, weakened manhood, failing memory and lame back, brought on by excesses, unnatural drains, or the follies of youth, that has cured so many worn and nervous men right in their own homes—without any additional help or medicine—that I think every man who wishes to regain his manly power and virility, quickly and quietly, should have a copy. So I have determined to send a copy of the prescription free of charge, in a plain, ordinary sealed envelope to any man who will write me for it.

This prescription comes from a physician who has made a special study of men and I am convinced it is the surest-acting combination for the cure of deficient manhood and vigor failure ever put together.

I think I owe it to my fellow man to send them a copy in confidence so that any man anywhere who is weak and discouraged with repeated failures may stop drugging himself with harmful patent medicines, secure what I believe is the quickest-acting restorative, upbuilding, SPOT-TOUCHING remedy ever devised, and so cure himself at home quietly and quickly. Just drop me a line like this: Dr. A. E. Robinson, 3791 Luck Building, Detroit, Mich., and I will send you a copy of this splendid recipe in a plain, ordinary envelope free of charge. A great many doctors would charge $3.00 to $5.00 for merely writing out a prescription like this—but I send it entirely free.

(Continued from page twenty.)

"Indeed! I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Gregor.

"When my father died," Dan continued. "I found among his papers a deed to a forty-acre tract of land in southern Missouri. It was considered almost worthless. But today I learned that a mining company that owns the land adjoining it has struck a rich vein of lead and jack near the line."

"By George! that is important. And you learned this since you came to the city?"

"Yes, sir," and Dan related the incidents that had led to his calling on Frederick Illington, the millionaire, and the result of the interview.

"Mr. Illington," Dan continued, "has offered ten thousand dollars for the forty-acre tract."

A look of astonishment crossed Mr. Gregor's face.

"By George, that is a neat bit of good fortune!" he cried. "Let me congratulate you, my boy."

And he grasped Dan's hand and pressed it warmly.

"I thank you, Mr. Gregor," replied Dan. "My first visit to Kansas City has been attended by good fortune for both Mr. Hickman and myself, it seems."

"Then you should not let this be your last visit," interposed Mr. Gregor. "It might be to your interest to invest your money in Kansas City property."

"Well, I haven't got it yet," smiled Dan, "and there is an old saying that 'there's many a slip between the cup and the lip'."

"I should like to give you nine thousand dollars for your chance of getting that ten thousand, since Frederick Illington has made the offer," declared Mr. Gregor, "if it wouldn't be cheating you out of a thousand dollars."

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming year.

CHAPTER XXX.

Dan and his host conversed on various topcis till eight, and then Dan accompanied Mr. Gregor and his wife to the theater, where they witnessed "The Merchant of Venice." This was the first time Dan had witnessed a Shakespearean play, and he was deeply interested.

After the play they had supper at one of the fashionable restaurants, and then drove home. Dan was filled with a sort of strange wonder and delight. Everything was so alien to his usual experience that it seemed like another world.

"You have made it so pleasant for me," he said, as he took his leave the next morning, "that it will always be a pleasure to remember my first visit to Kansas City."

"Then our efforts to entertaain you have been well paid," replied Mr. Gregor, heartily, "and we shall hope to see you again. Here is a little note to Mr. Hickman, and inclosed with it you will find the copy of the lease. Tell him to write me soon."

On arriving at the Union Depot, Dan failed to see Mr. Illington, but that gentleman put in appearance at the last moment, and they took the train for the south.

They did not arrive at Jacktown till the evening of the next day. Mr. Illington went to the "Occidental Hotel," which had just been completed and opened for the public, while Dan, after leaving the stage at the postoffice, hurried in the direction of the Merry Goose Mine.

He found Captain Hickman sitting in front of the tent in the warm September sunshine. The eyes of the captain brightened as he saw Dan approaching, and he got up to greet him.

"You made a quick trip, my boy," he said. "I hope you had a pleasant time."

"The best in the world," assured Dan. "That is not all; it has been a fortunate trip for us both."

"Glad to hear it. You saw Mills & Gregor?"

"Yes, sir, and I have brought you a copy of the lease. I think you will be surprised when you look it over."

He took the document from his pocket and laid it in Captain Hickman's hand.

"There is a little note from Mr. Gregor inclosed with it," Dan added, "and he wants to hear from you soon."

Captain Hickman opened the envelope, took out the lease, and read it, a curious smile hovering about his lips.

"Som my worthy brother-in-law has been making a little pin-money out of the business, it seems," he said, as he finished reading the document. "Well, well, I wouldn't have thought it."

"Nor I," said Dan. "How could he have the heart to do it, knowing as he must, that you were in need of the money?"

"That would give little concern to those who make money their God," replied Captain Hickman.

"But Mr. Simpkins is rich," said Dan, "and it could not have been the need of money that led him to keep what was yours."

Captain Hickman laughed.

"I find that the ones that have plenty of money are frequently the most anxious to get more," he remarked. "It gets to be a sort of disease."

"One can well believe it," agreed Dan. "I talked the matter over with Mr. Gregor, and he thought it advisable for you to get a settlement out of Mr. Simpkins as soon as possible."

"I think I shall run over to Springhaven and see him in a few days," answered Captain Hickman. "What do you say to coming with me?"

"I am agreeable," replied Dan. "It is probable that I shall have some business over there soon."

"You said you had met with some good fortune. I am anxious to hear what it is."

"It seems almost too good to be true," said Dan, and he related in detail the incidents of his trip to Kansas City, of his meeting with Frederick Illington, and the offer of ten thousand dollars for the little tract of land that he had thought worthless.

Captain Hickman listened to Dan's recital with profound amazement, and when it was finished he got up and took both the youth's hands in his.

"You don't know how glad I am to learn of your good fortune, by boy," he said. "You deserve it, and I know it won't spoil you, which is more than I could venture to say of most youths I know."

"I am glad to have you think so," responded Dan.

At this juncture Sid Akers appeared over the dump and announced that supper was ready.

The new house which had been erected for Mrs. Akers was much superior to the one swept away by the flood, being larger, with two rooms and a small garret for a bed. She had also been supplied with additional furniture, and altogether, she was now more comfortably situated than she had been before the flood.

She also had taken two new boarders, and was able to lay up something each week from the liberal sum she received.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Owing to the warm weather my rheumatism is much metter," said Captain Hickman, as he and Dan returned to the tent. "I think I shall be able to travel without much inconvience by tomorrow, and if you are ready, I shall go to Springhaven."

"I am ready to go at any time. I suppose Mr. Illington will be going in a day or so."

"Well, I suppose I shall have to look for another hand to take your place," smiled Captain Hickman. "A young man of your fortune is not likely to want such a job as you have."

"Well, I haven't got my fortune yet," laughed Dan, "and it is too soon to make plans for the future."

"It is pretty well settled that you will not be disappointed," remarked Captain Hickman. "Then, under the circumstances, I may be compelled to 'discharge you.'"

Dan gazed at him curiously.

"The fact is," went on the Captain with a smile "I may sell my mine. I don't think this sort of life agrees with me, and it may bring back the rheumatism and cause me to be a burden on my poor sister," and he laughed at the thought.

"You might manage to live off the interest on what Mr. Simpkins owes you," he suggested.

"That's so," chuckled Captain Hickman. "I was about to forget that."

"But, really, do you think you will sell?"

"I rather think I shall. I have been studying the matter over ever since yesterday. I have been offered five thousand dollars for my lease on the mine, and I am inclined to accept it. This, with what I already have, and what I shall receive from Mills & Gregor, ought to satisfy one of my modest needs.'

"Why, you will have quite a comfortable fortune," exclaimed Dan. "And in addition to that you will have a thousand a year from Mills & Gregor. That ought to be enough to exempt you from having to work in the mines."

"That's what I thought. If I keep the mine I shall be pottering about in it, for a fellow has to look after a mine himself if he expects to keep it from being run 'blind' on him, and the work don't agree with me, I find. If you make the deal with Illington, which I have no doubt you will, I shall sell the Merry Goose and we'll pull out. What do you say?"

"That would suit me precisely," declared Dan. "We can soon have the matter settled. Mr. Illington is at the hotel, and we'll go up and have a talk with him tomorrow. Meantime, early in the morning I want to run out and take a look at the forty-acre tract, if you will go with me, for I'd like to see it before selling."

"Certainly, I'll go with you. The men won't have the water out of the mine before noon, anyway, and we'll go out the first thing after breakfast. Perhaps Mr. Illington will go with us. He knows where the land lies, and we could drive directly to it if he were with us."

"That's right. I'll see the hack driver tonight and have him come round early in the morning for us."

As they drove up to the hotel the next morning Dan saw a familiar figure come onto the porch and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, it is Judge Turkington!" he cried, in pleased surprise, as the hack

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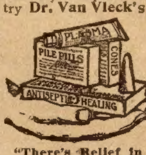

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drew up to the porch and stopped there.

The judge saw and recognized Dan and came forward smiling.

"I was just going to send a messenger in search of you," he said, as he greeted Dan pleasantly. "How are you, my boy?"

"The best in the world," responded Dan, as he shook hands with the judge. "I am glad, indeed, to see you. I was just planning a trip to Springhaven for that purpose."

"And I have saved you the trouble," smiled the judge. "I had a little business of my own on hand—relating to some land in this locality—so I decided to run over here and see you and look after my own business at the same time. But Mr. Illington tells me that you have already been apprised of the value of your land."

"Yes, sir, and that is my reason for wanting to see you. I wanted to ask if you would not act as my guardain as well as my adviser in the matter, as Mr. Illington has probably already told you."

"Of course, I shall be glad to serve you in any way I can," responded Judge Turkington. "I have been talking the matter over with Mr. Illington, and he is ready to close the deal at any time if his offer should be accepted. But I thought it best for us to take a look over the ground before doing anything further in the matter."

"That is why I am here," responded Dan, and turning, he introduced Judge Turkington to Captain Hickman.

The two men shook hands, and while they were talking Mr. Illington came out and was introduced to Captain Hickman.

A few minutes later the four were seated in the hack, and were driven in the direction of Agateville.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It is not our purpose to give in detail the incidents of the few days following those recorded in the preceding chapter. Suffice it to say, that on the departure of Judge Turkington, who was duly appointed as Dan's guardain, the sale of the land to Frederick Illington had been consummated, and Dan Newton found himself with a small fortune of ten thousand dollars at his command.

The sudden transition from poverty to fortune filled him with a sort of vague, undefinable wonder. He could hardly realize it, and more than once he half believed that he should find it all a dream.

Captain Hickman was not less fortunate, and having disposed of the Merry Goose Mine for the sum offered, he was now ready to bid farewell to the mines.

"I am not sorry that our work in the mines is over," he remarked to Dan one evening as he sat in front of the tent smoking his pipe. "But we both have reasons to be glad we came to Jacktown after all. It is a hard life at best, and it does not agree with me. Have you got everything packed so we can take the early stage in the morning?"

"Yes sir," responded Dan. "I haven't a very large wardrobe, and the work was soon done. What shall you do with the Merry Goose and your other traps?"

"Give them to Sid Akers. The boat will make a nice playhouse for him and his companions, and the other rubbish may be utilized by Mrs. Akers."

"I am afraid she will miss your liberal pay for our board when we are gone," said Dan.

"I thought of that," replied Captain Hickman, "and have been on the lookout for some others to take our places. As good luck would have it, Sneed and Thomas, the miners who made the good strike in Dipper Hollow, are coming to board with her tomorrow. So she will be none the worse for our going.'

About sunset Dan took a bucket and walked in the direction of the spring.

In the west, where the sun was sinking behind the hills, a golden haze hung like a transparent curtain. The hills were tinted with rich colors, and down the peaceful valley, which was the scene of so much industrial activity during the day, silence brooded.

At the wash-places the sluices were open to let the water escape, and the end of the jig holes were high in the air, telling that the day's work was done.

Dan stood for a moment at the spring, gazing at the scene, and as he stood thus he heard the sound of rapidly approaching steps, and the next instant a man, wearing the garb of a miner, came hurriedly into view from behind a clumb of bushes.

The stranger was evidently in a great hurry, and he fairly ran as he leaped across the stream. He stopped abruptly as he came within fifty yards of the spring, and making a quick gesture to Dan, said:

"Come this way, 'pardner,' and give me a lift. We had a little cave-in over the hill, and I'm afraid my 'pardner' is hurt!"

Dan's sympathy was instantly aroused, and dropping the bucket, he ran swiftly in response to the man's call.

"Right this way," the stranger said, and wheeling, he ran back in the direction from whence he had come, Dan following close at his heels. They ascended the slope, and reaching a narrow ridge, followed a winding path through the thickly clustering oaks to the valley below.

Dan had given the stranger but a fleeting glance at first, but now as he looked into his coarse features and noted the heavy, square jaws and sinister eyes, there was something strangely familiar in the face, but where he had seen it before he could not decide.

Dan glanced about him in every direction, but there was no sign of any shaft visible.

"Why, I didn't know there were any diggings over here!" he said.

"It is only a prosped shaft," replied the man, keeping on at a trot.

Dan followed in silence, panting for breath, and still looking in vain for the shaft. Descending into a deep hollow, they turned down its course, plunging through hazel thickets and tangled patches of plumb bushes.

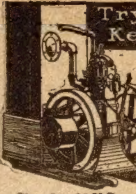
"How much farther is it?" Dan asked, a vague suspicion that the man had some sinister object in luring him thither, taking possession of him.

"It's only a little ways," was the reply. "We'll be there in a jiffy."

Dan made no reply, but the suspicion that had taken root in his mind grew rapidly.

He glanced about him in every direction. The place was wild and deserted,

(Continued back to page nineteen.)



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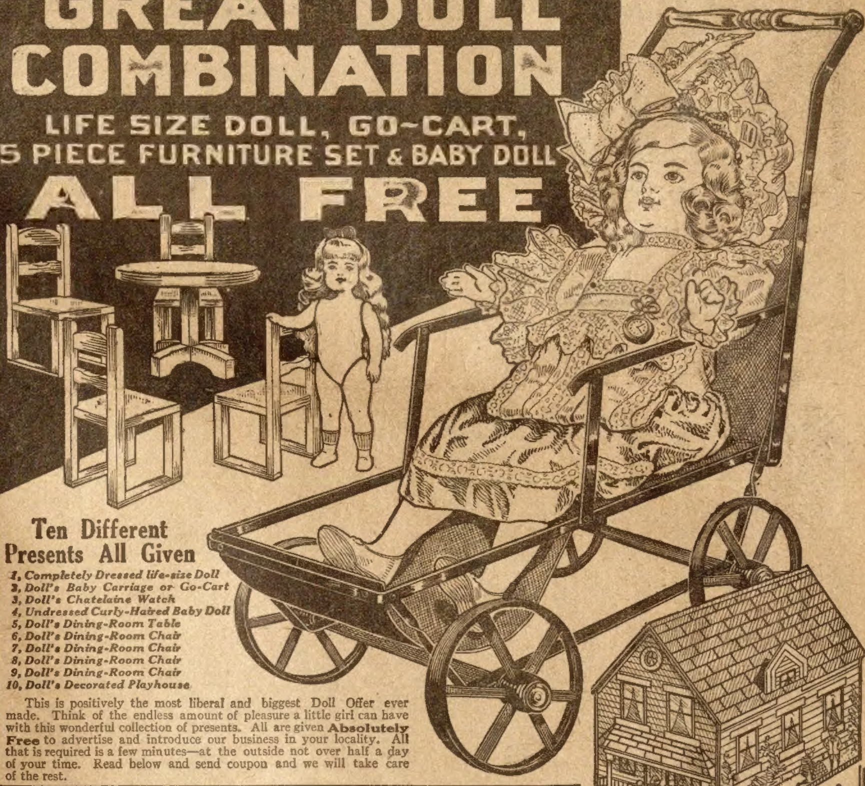

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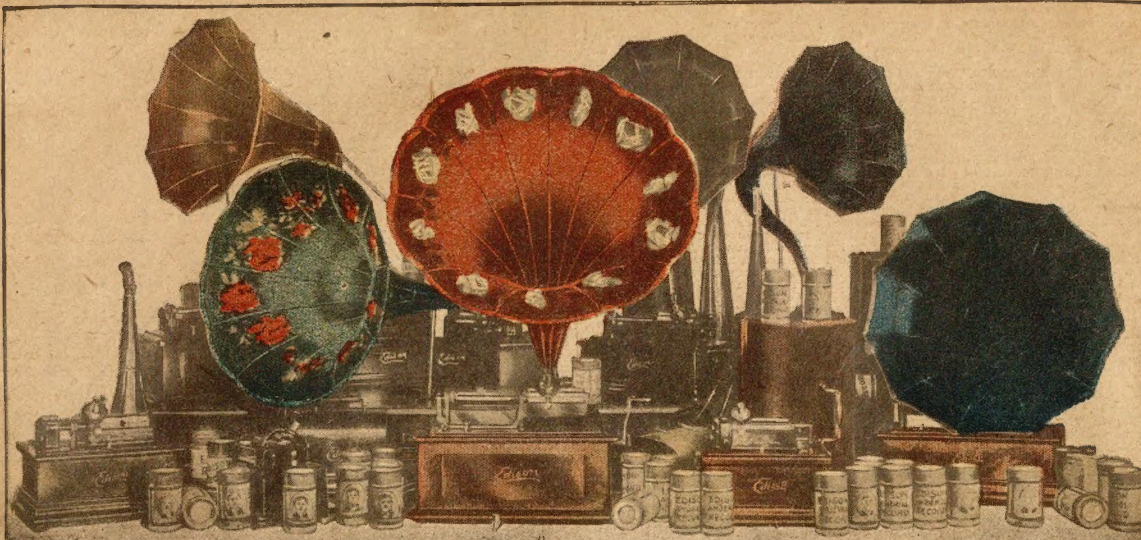

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